

No 14

2022

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF **FALCONRY**

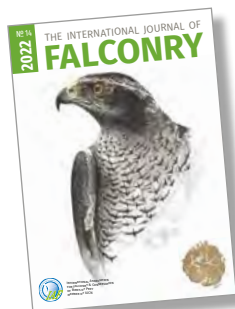


INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR FALCONRY & CONSERVATION
OF BIRDS OF PREY
MEMBER OF IUCN



- 4 The International Falconry Festival Returns in 2023
- 5 A Word from the President: *Majed Ali Al Mansoori*
- 9 Front Cover Artist – André Valério
- 10 Back Cover Artist – Richard Borquist – Creations in Leather
- 11 *Gniazdo Sokolników* – the Polish Falconry Club – celebrates 50 years: *Janusz Sielicki*
- 14 Reflections on NAFA and the 60th Anniversary Field Meet: *Dan Cecchini, Jr*
- 21 The History of the *Deutscher Falkenorden* (1921-2021): *Hans-Albrecht Hewicker, Honorary Chairman of the Deutscher Falkenorden e.V.*
- 25 An 800-year-old Historical Falconry Image Discovered in Norway: *Ellen Hagen*
- 27 Trapping Excursions in Alaska: *Simone Lupson-Cook*
- 34 Falconry in Pakistan: Past and Present: *Kamran Khan Yousafzai & Sami ur Rahman*
- 45 In Search of the Rare Orange-Breasted Falcon *Falco deiroleucus* (Temminck, 1825) in the Atlantic Forest, Brazil: *Gustavo Diniz Mendes de Carvalho, Eduardo Pio M. De Carvalho Filho and Juliana Peres*
- 50 The Evolution of Falconry in Australia: *Gina Pike*
- 58 The Falcon and the Bog: *Hilary A White*
- 66 Beyond the Misguided Perception: *Bob Dalton*
- 72 Hare Hawking in Argentina: *Juan Jose Pityla*
- 74 A Partnership between *Lepus*, the Iberian Hare Reproduction Centre, and Portugal's National Falconry Association
- 76 In Memoriam. Matt Gage: Falconer, Academic and Invaluable Servant of the IAF: *Adrian Lombard*
- 78 In Memoriam. The Hon. Johnny Morris (1951-2022): *Hilary White*
- 80 In Memoriam. Michael Kenneth Nicholls (1952-2021): *Maurice Nicholson*
- 81 The Value of Sharing the Knowledge: *Tony James*

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF **FALCONRY**



Front cover:

Watercolour head study of a goshawk by Portuguese artist André Valério



Back cover:

Tooled leather journal depicting a red-tailed hawk by United States artist Richard Borquist

Editor's disclaimer – The IAF is an international organization, and the contributors of this journal come from many countries with varied backgrounds. In order to retain “the voice” of the author and also their native writing style, the editor has chosen to leave some style inconsistencies by not editing to one formal standard of English.

Photo Credits – The photos used in the issue come from the authors of individual articles, unless otherwise indicated.

Support the IAF and receive the Journal!

Become an IAF Individual Subscriber from just €30/year to receive a yearly copy of the Journal, invitations to IAF events and exclusive perks.

For details check www.iaf.org under the heading 'Membership and Subscription'.



Design: Ewa Szelatyńska / ScanSystem.pl

Publisher: TURUL by Rhoe Services sp. z o.o., Warsaw, Poland

For: International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey
www.iaf.org

Number of issued copies: 1500.

ISSN 2080-6779

DISCLAIMER

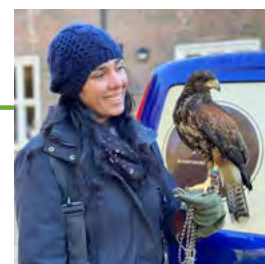
The IAF Journal welcomes contributions for articles both written and photographic. Though every care will be taken, the publishers will not be held liable for any manuscripts, photographs or other material lost or damaged whilst in their possession. The contents of this magazine are covered by copyright laws and may not be reproduced by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise without the prior written consent of the publishers. The opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the IAF or its officers and the IAF accepts no responsibility or liability for them. The publisher does not accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by error, inaccuracy or omission. It is the responsibility of the contributor or advertiser to gain permission to reproduce photographs. Any material may be refused at the discretion of the publishers.



Editorial Team



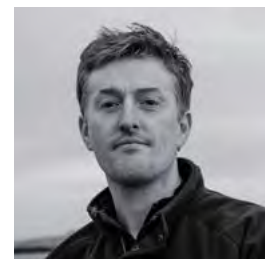
EDITOR – SUE CECCHINI,
EMAIL – SUE_G_C@HOTMAIL.COM
OR EDITOR@IAF.ORG



ALESSANDRA OLIVETO – EDITORIAL BOARD



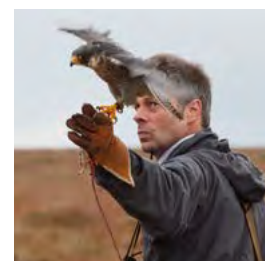
BOUKJE TUINHOUT – EDITORIAL BOARD



HILARY WHITE – EDITORIAL BOARD



JANUSZ SIELICKI – EDITORIAL BOARD



MARK UPTON – EDITORIAL BOARD



DAVID HOROBIN – LEAD PROOFREADER



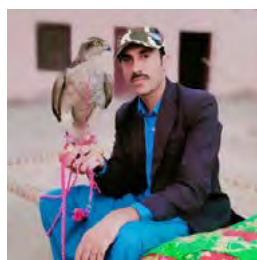
HEATHER MCNEMAR – PROOFREADER



MAURICE NICHOLSON – PROOFREADER



JULIAN MÜHLE – LEAD TRANSLATIONS
COORDINATOR



FAROOQ KHAN – TRANSLATIONS
COORDINATOR



ILARIA CERLI – TRANSLATIONS
COORDINATOR



In 1976, His Highness the late Sheikh Zayed, brought falconers, conservationists and governments together to discuss threats to falcon populations posed by modern chemicals, lack of habitats and a decline in the number of falcons worldwide. This 1976 event was, retrospectively, listed as the **First International Falconry Festival**.

Subsequent **International Falconry Festivals** in the UK in 2007 and 2009, both sponsored by the UAE, paved the way for falconry's inscription on UNESCO's list of humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010. Since then, the UAE has led the world's falcon communities in ensuring our traditions and values do not die out. These festivals bring together falconers, old and young, from up to 90 countries on all continents, to discuss and share ideals, problems, skills and dreams.

The **2nd International Falconry Festival 2011** at Al-Jahili Fort, Al Ain, united falconers from 80 countries, many of whom did not know that falconry existed outside their region. They learned from socialising with each other in a specially constructed desert camp where they met with local falconers from the UAE and the wider Gulf region. The eyes of the falconry world were opened when many realised that traditions they had thought had long died out, were living and thriving.

The **3rd International Falconry Festival 2014** was themed "Proclaiming the Element to the World". A desert camp setting which included a conference, and a move to Al Forsan in Abu Dhabi City, enabled falconers from all over the world to showcase falconry, its techniques and values to a public including local people and international ex-pats and continued the work of forging links across national boundaries.

The **4th International Falconry Festival 2017**, at the Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed School of Falconry and Desert Physiognomy, Remah, focused on youth. Young falconers from over 90 countries were sponsored to attend, learn and contribute in a series of desert workshops. Following this, a public presentation of their work and their national falconry was held over two days in Khalifa Park, Abu Dhabi City.

The upcoming **5th International Falconry Festival, 2023**, will also focus on transmitting knowledge from mentors and elders to the next generation. Again, the UAE hopes to sponsor over 200 youths from over 90 countries. We will offer multiple, desert-based, practical workshops over a three-day period, covering all aspects of how to make falconry furniture such as hoods, gloves and jesses, plus evening talks on various subjects at the hotel for all to join. Daily hawking trips into the desert will be organised by the *Emirates Falconers' Club*. Public presentations to showcase falconry's diverse forms around the world will take place in Sheikh Zayed Festival Park, where sponsored delegates will represent hawking in their club and country, and mentors and workshop leaders will show falconry art and crafts.

All are welcome. Visitors travelling at their own expense who register to attend the Festival can participate in hawking trips, workshops and public days, share transfers on the official transfer days and communal meals etc and benefit from a special deal with the hotel the sponsored falconers will be in.

Please check the official 5th IFF website at <https://iaf.org> for more information on dates, the programme, the registration form, hotel information and much more.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



رسالة الرئيس من معالي ماجد علي المنصوري

السيدات والسادة أعضاء الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة، ممثلو الأندية، وأصدقاء الاتحاد،

لقد كان هذان العامين الأكثر صعوبة في مهامي كرئيس للاتحاد حتى الآن، لكن الحياة استمرت في المضي قدماً، وبالمثل تواصلت أعمال الاتحاد، وأصبحت تكنولوجيا عقد المؤتمرات المرئية والندوات وورش العمل والدراسات مألوفة بالنسبة لنا حتى نستطيع الاستمرار في التعامل وجهاً لوجه، حتى وإن كانت تفصل بيننا قارات ومناطق زمنية مختلفة.

في شهر أكتوبر 2021، تم عقد اجتماع مجلس أعضاء الاتحاد خلال معرض أبوظبي الدولي للصيد والفروسية ADIHEX أكبر المعارض التجارية في العالم في مجالات الصقارة والصيد والفروسية. وقمنا باستغلال الفرصة ودعونا عدداً من الشباب لزيارة المعرض وحضور اجتماع مجلس الأعضاء وممثلي الاتحاد كمراقبين، وذلك من أجل تشجيعهم للعب دور أكثر نشاطاً في اتحادنا. ونحن نتطلع للتواصل بشكل أكبر في السنوات القادمة. لم يتمكن العديد من المندوبين الوطنيين من حضور الاجتماع شخصياً، ولكن عدداً كبيراً منهم حضر الاجتماع عبر الإنترنت من خلال اتصال زوم.

عام 2021 كانت سنة الانتخابات؛ وقد أسعدني جداً إعادة انتخابي رئيساً للاتحاد لفترة ثانية. وأهنيئ النابيين الجديدين، مارك أبتون (أوروبا وأفريقيا وجنوب الصحراء وأوقيانوسيا) وأوتغونسايخان دورجسورين (آسيا). كما أرحب بالأمناء التنفيذيين المشتركين الجدد للاتحاد، د. أندريا فيلا وفابيان زانوكيا.

استمرت العلاقة الطيبة للاتحاد مع اللجنة الدولية الحكومية لصون التراث الثقافي غير المادي في منظمة اليونسكو؛ ففي 14 ديسمبر، ضمت اليونسكو 6 دول جديدة إلى ملف "الصقارة، تراث إنساني حي" في القائمة التمثيلية للتراث الثقافي غير المادي للبشرية، وهذه الدول هي كرواتيا وإيرلندا وقيرغيزستان وهولندا وبولندا وسلوفاكيا، وهو الملف الذي قامت دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة بتقديمه وقيادته في عام 2010، كما عملت العديد من الأندية جاهدة من أجل تحقيق هذا الهدف المهم.

هنالك حكمة قديمة تقول "ينمو المجتمع بشكل رائع عندما يزرع كبار السن أشجاراً لن يجلسوا في ظلها أبداً". كان اعتراف اليونسكو بالصقارة هو نتيجة لجهود الأجداد والآباء، أولئك الذين أنشأوا وصقلوا فن الصقارة رغم معرفتهم بأنهم قد لا يرون ثمرة جهودهم. إن الصقارة عائلة؛ ومن المؤثر أن العديد من الدول تشعر بأنها فرد في هذه العائلة. ويسر الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة الاستمرار في المساعدة في إنجاز هذا العمل كله؛ فنحن نملك فريق عمل ممتاز.

ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، نأمل أن يشهد العام المقبل تعزيز جهود الاتحاد في التقريب بين أعمال الحفظ التي يقوم بها الصقارون والجوانب الثقافية لفن الصيد التي نملكها، حيث أنه يتم

الاعتراف بأهمية مشاركة المجتمعات في جهود الحفظ أكثر فأكثر. وقد أدركت منظمة اليونسكو بالفعل أهمية دور المجتمعات والسكان الأصليين في دعم القضايا البيئية، ويأمل الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة في عقد ورش عمل ومؤتمرات تشمل كل هذه المجتمعات واتفاقيات الصون، وبالتعاون مع اليونسكو، حتى يتم الاعتراف أكثر بمساهمات الصقارين ولضمان مشاركتنا جميعاً في خطط التنمية البيئية على أعلى مستوى.

إن جميع الأخبار الخاصة بالصقارة التي تصدر عن الاتحاد، أو التي تصل إلينا عبر الأعضاء من كافة الدول، يتم الإعلان عنها عن طريق الرسائل الإلكترونية المباشرة (إلى الأعضاء) وفي عدد النشرة الإلكترونية الشهري (تُرسل إلى قائمة مراسلة تضم حوالي 2000 شخص) وعلى مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي حيث تحصل منشوراتنا بشكل منتظم على تفاعل من قبل 11,000 متابع، وأحياناً إلى ضعف هذا العدد. يرجع الفضل في ذلك إلى ثلاث مجموعات عمل وهي: مجموعة الاتصالات والعلاقات العامة، ومجموعة عمل المرأة، ومجموعة العمل التعليمية والتي تضم جيشاً من المترجمين المتطوعين الذين يقومون الآن بترجمة منشوراتنا إلى جميع لغات عمل الأمم المتحدة الست، وإلى 12 لغة أخرى تهم الصقارين. وتُعتبر مجموعة العمل التعليمية طريقة ممتازة لجذب الصقارين الشباب إلى الاتحاد.

يُعد الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة اتحاداً لأندية الصقارة والمنظمات ذات الصلة، ونقوم باستخدام معرفتنا وخبرتنا المستمدة من العديد من هذه الدول في مساعدة الدول الأخرى المتعثرة في هذا المجال. ورغم ذلك، لا يمكننا التعامل مع المشكلات المحلية لكل دولة دون أن نطلب منا منظمات الأندية الوطنية الخاصة بالاتحاد القيام بذلك، وهو الأمر الذي تتوافر له جميع موارد الاتحاد. خلال أعوام 2021 و2022، قمنا بتقديم المساعدة للعديد من الأندية الوطنية التي تواجه المعارضة في بلادها. أودّ أن أطلب من جميع أعضاء منظمات الاتحاد مراقبة أي تغييرات مقترحة في القوانين التي قد تؤثر على الصقارة عن كثب، حيث أننا نملك فرصة لإيجاد الحلول إذا ما كانت استجابتنا سريعة.

سيكون من دواعي سرورنا اللقاء معكم جميعاً بقدر استطاعتنا عندما نتشارك فرحة انتهاء أزمة الوباء، وسيساعدنا أن نرحب بكم في معرض أبطوبي الدولي للصيد والفروسية ADIHEX لعام 2022 الذي يمثل قيمة مضافة لعالم الصقارة والصيد والتراث، والمساهمة في ضمان نجاح الحدث وتطويره المستمر. كما سنلتقي في اجتماع مجلس الاتحاد 2022 في بولندا.

وأخيراً، أودّ التعبير عن امتناني وتقديري لجميع رواد مجموعات عمل الاتحاد والأعضاء وجميع ممثلي الأندية الذين يعملون بجد للترويج للصقارة وتحقيق مهام وأهداف الاتحاد. كما أودّ أن أشكر النائبين اللذين انتهت فترات عملهما في 2021، كيبيا ناكاجيما وجانزو سييلكي.

إن أكبر رصيد لنا وأهم مزايانا، هي قوة وكفاءة ومهارات المتطوعين لدينا، لذا نشكركم جميعاً.



A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri

Delegates, Club Representatives and Friends of IAF,

These two years have been difficult for my presidency, but life has continued, as has the work of the IAF, and we have all become familiar with the technology for video-conferencing, enabling conferences, workshops and chats to continue in a face-to-face way, even if we are continents away from each other and in different time-zones.

In October 2021, the IAF Council of Delegates Meeting was at the *National Exhibition Centre* in Abu Dhabi during the ADIHEX exhibition, which is the largest trade exhibition in the world for falconry, hunting & equestrianism. We used the opportunity to invite a number of young people to ADIHEX and to attend the Council of Delegates Meeting as observers, with a view to encouraging them to play a more active role in our organisation. We look forward to closer contacts as the years roll by. Many National Delegates were not able to attend the meeting in person, although a large number did attend the meeting online through a Zoom connection.

2021 was an election year; I was very happy to be re-elected as IAF President for a second term of office.

I congratulate two new Vice-presidents, Mark Upton (Europe, Africa South of the Sahara and Oceania) and Otgonsaikhan Dorjsuren (Asia). I also welcome the new joint IAF Executive Secretaries Drs. Andrea Villa and Fabián Zancocchia.

IAF's relationship with the UNESCO ICH continues to be good; on 14th December 2021, UNESCO included six new countries in the inscription of "Falconry, a living human heritage" on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, originally led in 2010 by the United Arab Emirates. These are Croatia, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia. Many clubs have worked very hard towards this and its importance cannot be overestimated.

There's an old proverb that says, "A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they shall never sit". This recognition by UNESCO is due to those who have gone before, those who have nurtured and cultivated the art of falconry knowing that they may never see it recognised. Falconry is a family; it is touching that so many countries feel a part of this family. IAF is happy to continue to help with all of this work; we have an excellent team.

Scan for Spanish,
Arabic, Russian
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic, Russian
and Urdu



To this end, it is hoped that the coming year will see IAF bringing the conservation work done by falconers and the cultural aspects of our hunting art closer together. The importance of communities' involvement in conservation is being acknowledged more and more, as UNESCO already recognises the importance of communities and indigenous people in environmental matters and IAF hopes to hold workshops and conferences including all of these, the communities, the conservation conventions and UNESCO, to further recognise falconers' contributions and to ensure our participation in environmental development at the highest level.

All falconry news which originates with the IAF, or which is passed on to us by the national delegations, is reported extensively by direct email (to delegates), in the regular eBulletins (to a mailing list of almost 2000) and via social media, where posts regularly attain reaches of 11,000 – occasionally as high as twice that number. Credit for this must go to three Working Groups: the Communications and PR Group, the Women's Working Group and the Education Working Group, which includes the army of volunteer translators who now translate our publications into all six United Nations working languages, and another 12 languages which are regularly important to falconers. The Education Working Group is an excellent way of bringing young falconers into the IAF.

IAF is a federation of falconry clubs and falconry related organisations and we use knowledge and expertise gained in many of these countries to assist countries in difficulty. However, we cannot act on national issues without being asked by our IAF member organisations, to which all the IAF's resources are dedicated. During 2021 and 2022 we have supported many national clubs facing opposition in their own countries. I ask all our IAF member organisations to closely monitor any proposed changes in law that might affect falconry. If we respond early, we have a chance.

It will be our pleasure, as we share the joy of getting out of the pandemic crisis, to meet you all as often as we can: you will be welcomed to ADIHEX 2022, which represents an additional value to the world of falconry, hunting and heritage, and contributes to ensuring the continuous development of falconry. We will see each other for our 2022 Council of Delegates Meeting in Poland.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude and recognition for all the leaders of the IAF working groups, their members and all the delegates who work so hard to promote falconry and to achieve the IAF's mission and goals. I thank the two vice-presidents whose terms of office ended in 2021, Keiya Nakajima and Janusz Sielicki.

Our biggest asset is the strength, competence and skills of our volunteers, so thank you all.



It is with deep sadness we report the passing away of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the United Arab Emirates, on Friday, May 13th.

The greatest support for falconry over recent years has come from the UAE, particularly from its continuous promotion of the UNESCO Inscription, its regular International Falconry Festivals in Abu Dhabi and its many conservation projects.

Heritage is a fundamental pillar in the approach founded by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and its preservation and development are highlighted as major components of the national identity of the United Arab Emirates. Sheikh Zayed's legacy to falconers has been embraced by his sons and it is with considerable pleasure that we congratulate His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on taking over as the President of the United Arab Emirates.

FRONT COVER ARTIST ANDRÉ VALÉRIO



André Valério was born in Lisbon, Portugal, in January 1989. After graduating in Environment and Product Design, he decided to broaden his horizons in 2016 and gave priority to working outdoors. He currently works in bird control, allowing him to combine his art with his strong passion for falconry and direct contact with nature and its cycles.

Self-taught in watercolour painting, he found, in this, his form of expression. Passionate about wildlife in general and birds of prey in particular, he focuses his painting work on the fluidity and detail of each species. Fascinated by detail and realism, he finds in his brush strokes, in the fine details and in the most spontaneous gestures of watercolor painting, a sense of personal and artistic achievement.

He has participated in several exhibitions and his work has appeared in national and international catalogues. We see here a collection of works, undertaken over the last year, with the theme of wild and trained hawks. Many of these works were carried out under the guidance of their falconer commissioners, thus giving perpetuity to the hawks with whom they shared unique moments.



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and Russian



Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish





BACK COVER ARTIST RICHARD BORQUIST – CREATIONS IN LEATHER

Rich started leatherwork shortly after he started falconry in 1972. He has always had a passion for both and that passion was evident at his wedding to Kim in 1989, at which hawks were prominent.

Rich helped manage the weathering yard at the *North American Falconers' Association* (NAFA) Field Meet starting in 1982. Working in the yard allowed Rich an opportunity to photograph a wide variety of hawks, which thus offered opportunities to obtain various head shots of hawks he didn't have access to. These pictures led to portrait belt buckles and limited-edition pieces. Embossed leather pieces soon followed, and it was an honour for Rich to design the inlays of the first Book of Remembrance for *The Archives of Falconry* in Boise, Idaho. Rich completed three covers for these memorials and his son, Brandon, has completed one cover.

After a NAFA meet with international visitors, Rich noticed the tradition of flasks used to toast the quarry and flight, so he started designing custom leather flask covers. Rich then created a line of hood cases that can be customised with artwork from photos. With the development of GPS telemetry, he has branched out into pocket link cases as well as phone cases and knife sheaths, all with custom artwork. Rich starting



designing leather covers for falconry journals, which is what is depicted on the back cover of this issue.

Rich continues his passion for falconry and has combined that with his love of leather work, creating beautiful, one-of-a-kind custom pieces. He has passed on his artistic leather talents to both his sons, Brandon and Ian and, if you get to a NAFA Meet, you'll now find Brandon managing the weathering yard.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



Gniazdo Sokolników – the Polish Falconry Club – celebrates 50 years

Janusz Sielicki

The art of falconry was very popular in medieval Poland: there is evidence of it being practiced as Poland became a kingdom in the 10th century and, in the 12th century, the *falcatio* law was introduced, obliging the protection of nests and the provision of food for royal falcons. In 1584, one of the first books in Polish about hunting birds and hawking was published by Mateusz Cyganski: *Myślistwo Ptasze*.

The decline of falconry started in the 18th century due to a preference for guns, and hawks were no longer used for hunting. When Poland lost freedom for more than a century, falconry was additionally suppressed by the occupiers and sadly, in the 19th century, became practically unknown.

There were a few unsuccessful attempts to revive the tradition of falconry before WWII, but at the beginning of the 1970's the process of restitution of Polish falconry began. Similar activities were undertaken a few years earlier in other countries of the former Soviet bloc – East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Earlier, in the late 1960s, Mr Zygmunt Pielowski practiced falconry on his own as a scientific experiment; he was a scientist who specialised in game. Mr Czesław Sielicki, in 1970, started preparations to legalise falconry, since it had been his interest since university. He was a forester, teacher and hunter interested in hunting traditions and kynology. He also revived the tradition of hunting horns in Poland, and organised the first hunting horn ensemble at the *Forestry High School* in Tuchola in 1970.

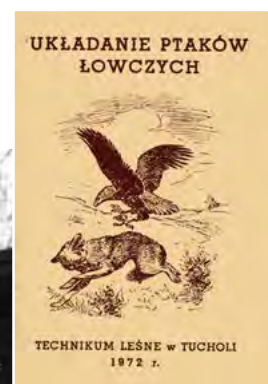
In 1971, Mr Sielicki organised *Raróg*, the *School Falconry Circle*, at Tuchola's *Forestry High School*, where he was a teacher. Mr Sielicki and his six students had taken advantage of the great opportunity to attend a falconry course in East Germany in late summer of 1971, at which Polish falconers were connected with a practising falconry organisation and shown a model of high-level falconry. That, also, started the model of training falconry candidates – with an apprentice period and obligatory falconry course.

In 1972, the *Ministry of Forestry* permitted falconry as a legal way of hunting in Poland. Later that year,



Zygmunt Pielowski

Mr Sielicki organised the *Polish Falconry Club – Gniazdo Sokolników* (Falconers' Eyrie) of the *Polish Hunting Association* with founding members also including Zygmunt Pielowski, Wacław Lesiński and Andrzej Mania. That same autumn, the first course for six hunters, candidates for becoming falconers, was organised in Tuchola. The first Field Meeting of Polish falconers was organised



Booklet
by Czesław
Sielicki 1972

Czesław
Sielicki



Falconers' course 1972



International Falconers' Meeting in Poland 1973

by Mr Sielicki in Kobylniki the same year with an international presence. This became a yearly tradition, followed over 50 years with only two exceptions in the 21st century – due to bird flu in 2006 and COVID in 2020.

2021 saw the 50th Anniversary of this falconry club, which is still in existence. A few years earlier, during the anniversary of the school, a stone with a memorial desk dedicated to Czesław Sielicki was installed. The 50th Anniversary was celebrated at the school with many former students in attendance, including a few from the first class. The celebration was graced by the 14th Falcons' Kite Trial Competition organised by *The Polish Falconry Club* under the auspices of the *Polish Hunting Association*. Graduates of this club form a large part of the current practitioners of falconry in Poland.

Since the beginning, the activities of the students in the Tuchola forestry school's falconry club comprise:

- Manning and training hawks for the purpose of hawking and preserving falconry traditions.
- Active rehabilitation of birds of prey by falconry methods. This task is conducted year-round depending on the current needs. Birds brought to the *Falconry Club*, if they have an opportunity to be restored to their natural habitat after being treated, are released. Now and again such birds need to be restored to independent life using falconry methods.
- Ecological education is a task conducted by the club throughout the year. A number of trips and visitors to the *Falconry Club* proclaims an enormous interest about falconry issues. An ornithological competition, entitled 'Birds of prey – our allies', is organised regularly. To date, this competition has been held seventeen times (2002-2018), and its major aim is to broaden the knowledge concerning aspects of nature conservation. Birds of prey are often perceived as 'hunting pests' and their role in natural selection and maintaining healthy ecosystems is underestimated. The ornithological competition is a chance to promote ecological knowledge and is aimed at school students.
- Reintroduction of the peregrine is conducted by breeding birds whose young shall be released in order to restore the wild peregrine population.

Today, falconry in Poland is practised by approximately 250 falconers, mainly members of the *Polish Falconry Club – Gniazdo Sokolników*. The legal status of falconry has much improved over the years, and



is now included in Hunting Law. To become a falconer, one has to become a member of the *Polish Hunting Association* and pass the apprenticeship, entailing special training and a state exam. Falconry is now, also, involved in environmental education, raptor protection and cultural heritage protection. Falconers have played a main role in the *Polish Peregrine Restoration Project* run by the “Falcon” Society for Wild Animals (www.peregrinus.pl), with more than 1,300 peregrines having been released, a wild breeding population started in 1998 and a tree-nesting population established in 2012.

In 2015, falconry was inscribed on the Polish national heritage list and, in 2021, Poland became one of twenty-four nations on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list which denotes falconry as “a living heritage”.

The celebration of the 50th Anniversary and the UNESCO listing will take place at the Annual Field Meeting in autumn 2022.



Scan for Spanish, French and Polish



Scan for Chinese, Arabic and Russian



Janusz working with the *Polish Peregrine Restoration Project*

JANUSZ SIELICKI

Janusz Sielicki became interested in falconry aged six. A biologist by education, he has been active in bird of prey conservation and falconry heritage promotion for the last 40 years. Janusz has served on the board of *Gniazdo Sokolników*, the *Polish Falconry Club* and, since 1990, has been active in the *Polish Peregrine Restoration Project*, which is working toward re-establishing the tree-nesting ecotype. To date, nearly 1,500 peregrines have been released, and tree-nesting peregrines have been sighted in Poland since 2012. Beginning in 2000, he was the Polish IAF delegate followed by IAF Conservation Officer, and IAF Vice-president for Europe, Africa and Oceania (2016-2021). He represents the IAF to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species, notably their *Saker Task Force* and *Energy Task Force*, and has been involved for the last eight years in solving saker electrocution problems. In 2021, Janusz helped Poland obtain UNESCO recognition for falconry as part of humanity’s Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Photo credits Klaus Leix



Reflections on NAFA and the 60th Anniversary Field Meet

Dan Cecchini, Jr

Brief History of American Falconry Organisations

The history of North American falconry has been well documented and published by the Founder and Curator Emeritus of *The Archives of Falconry*, S. Kent Carnie. A very abbreviated summary of pre-NAFA falconry as well as some key milestones in NAFA history, as documented by Carnie, is relayed in the following several paragraphs to give a bit of context to the history and formation of NAFA.

Falconry does not have a long history in North America, based on what is known today. There have been sporadic instances of falconry being practiced in the past, but not in a widespread and long-term way. Whilst it is even reported that Christopher Columbus had at least one falconer in his party who hunted with his hawks in the New World prior to 1500 AD, it appears falconry was rare in North America for centuries following the falconer associated with Columbus.

In the early 20th century, several articles were published that helped stir an interest in falconry in North America. There were several *National Geographic* articles published in the 1920s-30s which provided some insight

into falconry and portrayed raptors as non-vermin wildlife in America. Two of those articles were the Fuertes article in 1920 and the Craighead brothers' article in 1937. These articles provided a readily available reference for individuals who were looking for information regarding raptors and falconry, and they helped to spark further interest in falconry in North America.

In the spring of 1941, the *American Falconers' Association* was started, but it only lasted a short time. They produced three issues of their publication. Then, in the spring of 1942, the *Falconers' Association of North America* was formed and published a *Journal* until the fall of 1943. There was a lapse in national organised falconry in America until some years after World War II. In the fall of 1953, *The Falconry Club of America* was formed. This organisation was in existence and continued to produce its publication *Falconry News and Notes* until the fall of 1961.

By 1961, there was a sense that the small but growing number of American falconers might be interested in forming a new falconry organisation. In September, 1961, an invitation was sent out to all known falconers



Past NAFA Presidents with incoming NAFA President at podium

to see the level of interest in the formation of just such a new organisation. A lot of interest was expressed in that possibility, and the first gathering attracted 49 registered falconers from across America. Before 1961 came to a close, the *North American Falconers' Association* (NAFA) had been formed.

During the 1960s, wild peregrine declines became widely apparent to the scientific and falconry communities. The same types of population declines were observed in bald eagles and ospreys. The status of raptors was broadly beginning to shift from being considered vermin to an appreciation of the ecological value of bird of prey populations. By 1972, the federal government had taken on jurisdiction over raptors by adding them to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). This change gave falconers a focal point toward legalising falconry, which was the federal government.

NAFA was working on model laws and regulations for states to make falconry regulations more consistent across the country. The *US Fish and Wildlife Service* (USFWS) based its new, proposed, federal falconry regulations on NAFA's proposed regulations. NAFA worked hard to promote the proposed federal regulations among the falconry community, as well as with the federal bureaucrats. The NAFA campaign for the new falconry regulations resulted in the USFWS stating that they received more comment letters supporting the falconry regulations than they had received on any single issue before or since. That work on the federal regulations put NAFA in a position to act as the representative voice of American falconry. For years after the publication of the federal falconry regulations, NAFA also provided guidance and assistance to affiliate state falconry organisations in their efforts for state falconry legalisation, regulations and falconry seasons. By 1998, legalisation had occurred in 49 of the 50 states: only Hawaii has not legalised falconry (their only indigenous raptor is endangered and they prohibit the import of non-native raptors).

In 1984, a federal sting operation, which became known as "Operation Falcon", was conducted by the USFWS because they incorrectly posited that there was a multi-million dollar black-market trade in falcons. The USFWS was unable to substantiate its claims, since the only illegally-taken hawks they could find were birds that the USFWS illegally took themselves, via an entrapment operation of the



Service's own making. It was a humiliating experience for the Service. Most of the work to successfully take on exposing the USFWS sting operation was taken on by leaders within NAFA, including the IAF's late past-President, Frank Bond.

The NAFA Organisation Today

The *North American Falconers' Association* was founded to encourage the proper practice of the sport of falconry and the wise use and conservation of birds of prey. From a handful of members in its early years, NAFA now has a membership of about 2,000 members and is one of the largest falconry organisations in the world. Though founded principally to represent the interests of North American falconers, NAFA gladly accepts members from all countries who share a passion for birds of prey and falconry.

NAFA is governed by a Board of Directors elected by the membership. The Board of Directors consists of Regional Directors, one representing each of eight geographical areas of North America. There are also two Directors-at-large which represent the total membership. The Board of Directors appoints the President and the Vice President. The NAFA President appoints the other officers charged with the day-to-day operations of the club.

NAFA has been very involved for decades with devising regulations on federal and state levels in the USA that protect both the hawks used in the sport and the sport itself. NAFA was an early advocate for preventing raptor electrocution, working with Morley Nelson to produce a video over 20 years ago showing the risk to raptors from electric transmission structures.



That video was shared with power companies and regulatory bodies, resulting in modifications to electrical transmission structures. NAFA has worked with Canadian and Mexican falconry organisations to improve laws and regulations in those countries as well. As a member of the *International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey*, NAFA has provided a voice in aiding our fellow falconers around the world.

NAFA members annually receive three *Hawk Chalk* publications and an annual *Journal*. These publications contain a wealth of fine articles and photographs on the sport of falconry. All members are invited to attend NAFA's excellent annual field meet, held in November of each year.

NAFA Logo

The unique and interesting NAFA logo was designed by late NAFA member and former NAFA Director, Byron Gardner of Oregon. Byron chose the colours of black, white, and grey because of their elegance and purity. He wanted a simple design so it would read well when reduced to letterhead size. The falcon is in grey (silver) to represent the gyrfalcon, as the highest pinnacle of the sport throughout history. The falcon flies in an upward diagonal direction across the circle which is divided by black and white. The field of black and white is broken by an active line implying a landscape dominated by a soaring mountain which suggests a falcon flying high.

Lone Wolf, Oklahoma NAFA Meet 2021

In 2021 the *North American Falconers' Association* celebrated its 60th Anniversary, during the annual NAFA Field Meet in Lone Wolf, Oklahoma, USA. Oklahoma is approximately in the middle of the USA between the East and West coasts and just above Texas, near the southern portion of the American Great Plains.

The 60th Anniversary NAFA Field Meet was well-attended, with approximately 340 participants registered.

There was a wide variety of trained hawks present, from kestrels to eagles, with almost 100 hawks and falcons brought to the meet. The evening programmes were very informative, including information on goshawks nesting in areas of high human density and activity, the falcon mascot programme at the US Air Force Academy, eagle updates and techniques for trapping passage merlins. Nightly vendor tables and raffles, and the annual outdoor shrimp boil, continued to be a fun part of the meet experience available to all attendees.

Quarry Availability for Falconers

The area around the meet venue held populations of game for the attendees. Rob Huber did a good job of identifying hawking areas and working with landowners to obtain access to hunting ground. Like most meets, it took several days for the hawkers to get the lay of the land, find fields with the game they were looking for, find the ponds and creeks that would work for their hawks and get permission to hunt from landowners to fly their birds. Once they did, many falconers were able to take game with their hawks. The quarry taken was largely ducks, rabbits and hares, but there were many miscellaneous quarry brought to bag as well.

New NAFA Field Meet Trailer

The 60th Anniversary NAFA Field Meet was the perfect platform for the debut of the new and larger NAFA Field Meet trailer. This is the third field meet trailer. The first, an open trailer to haul weathering yard fencing, was followed up by the purchase of an enclosed trailer, which not only was able to haul weathering yard fencing, but also provided added space for temporary perching and housing of hawks which need such accommodations when falconers get back to the weathering yard after closing time, or if a mishap in the weathering area occurs. The new and improved trailer was brought to the NAFA meet



Trailer sponsors

New NAFA Field Meet trailer



by Martin Geleynse, from Canada, towed behind his Toyota Tacoma hawking rig. It's a bigger trailer and has a colourful wrap promoting NAFA and falconry as it rolls down the highway en route to NAFA meets. It also provides a wonderful and highly visible billboard for NAFA when parked next to the weathering area at the field meet. Many non-falconry locals tend to come to the NAFA meet due to all of the promotion done by the meet chairs, and the new NAFA trailer will do a great job of communicating the concepts of falconry and NAFA to people who show up to see and photograph the hawks in the yard.

It's hard to mention the NAFA Field Meet trailer without mentioning the Borquists, Rich and Brandon.

Rich had been the NAFA weathering yard warden since 2001 after helping former warden Bruce Clements for two decades prior. Rich stored the weathering yard material at his place in Illinois, then hauled it each November to NAFA meets far and wide. Rich officially turned over the warden job to his son, Brandon, in 2016, but he's still helping. It can be a thankless job filled with many long, challenging hours and often in frigid temperatures, but the weathering yard warden works to keep all our hawks safe!

NAFA Field Meet Prints

NAFA started a tradition of creating field meet prints for registered attendees, beginning with the 1979 Field Meet. That tradition has continued through to today and provides a great gift and remembrance for each registered attendee to the meet. The original artwork from which the print is made is a raffle item at the Friday evening banquet and is a great money raiser for NAFA meets. Many of the prints have been outstanding over the years.

Field Meet Co-Chairs and Meet Team

The co-chairs of the 60th Anniversary NAFA Field Meet were Phil Salvati and Robert Huber. They and their team of volunteers did an excellent job of pulling together an excellent field meet, from the venue facilities, through getting permission for hawking in the area, to the many details associated with the meals, daily meetings and banquet. Robert reported that the state wildlife department executive director, the chief of game and support staff attended the NAFA Meet, and the team was able to show them a great day of falconry in the field. Robert said they gained years of credit with state officials at the meet. This has been one of the



Raffle table at nightly meetings



Robert Huber, co-chair of the NAFA Meet

positive byproducts of NAFA meets over the years, and I'm glad to hear Robert and Oklahoma falconers were able to gain that benefit to falconry's reputation after all of the hard work they put into the meet.

NAFA Field Meet Banquet

Typically, the NAFA Field Meet Friday Banquet has provided great food, a fantastic array of raffle items and wonderful company among the attendees, as well as the awarding of game pins. The 2021 NAFA meet was no exception.

One thing I'd like to note is that former NAFA president, Larry Dickerson, came up with a wonderful idea while serving as NAFA VP during my tenure as NAFA president in 2009. Larry thought it was important to celebrate the falconers we have lost in the preceding year by reading their names aloud during the NAFA meet banquet and tolling a bell as each name was read. Larry used his own money to make this happen by purchasing a bell and case and donating it to NAFA specifically for this tradition. The bell is now taken to each NAFA meet for the memorial to falconers who have passed. It can be emotional to hear the names and bell tolling. This tradition has continued now for the past dozen years and will hopefully continue for many years into the future.

It was an honour to have Tom Smylie, NAFA's first secretary /treasurer and a NAFA founding member, as the Friday night banquet keynote speaker. Tom did a great job recounting some of the early days of NAFA, as well as reflecting on how much falconry has changed in America over the decades.

As part of NAFA's 60th Anniversary celebration, the living NAFA presidents were each presented with

Outgoing NAFA president, Sheldon Nicolle getting the banquet started



Quartz Mountain State Park Lodge



a special, commemorative NAFA 60th Anniversary jacket during the banquet. It's been great to have been a part of NAFA's history and successes over the years, and I'll wear the jacket proudly.

Our Trip To Lone Wolf, Oklahoma

In the summer of 2021, I got a call from NAFA Director-at-large, Rob Rainy. I hadn't talked to Rob in a while and hadn't seen him in person for more than a few years. *[Rob and I worked together for a number of years in NAFA. When I was NAFA President I asked Rob to be part of NAFA's legal team. Rob was very helpful when he advocated for the NAFA Board to move from the then practice of using emails for board activities and transition to live phone board meetings, using Robert's rules of order to manage the meetings. It was a productive idea that made the board more functional].* Rob was calling about NAFA's upcoming 60th Anniversary celebration. NAFA leadership was going to celebrate this anniversary during the NAFA annual Field Meet, which was going to be held during the week before Thanksgiving in Lone Wolf, Oklahoma. I promised Rob I would get back to him and let him know our plans regarding attending the meet.

The idea of a celebration of NAFA's 60th Anniversary, as described by Rob, seemed like a great idea. Sue and I discussed the possibility of attending the 2021 NAFA Meet to be part of this celebration. For 33 years straight, I hadn't missed a NAFA meet, then our family moved to Oregon on the west coast of America. The long distance to travel to NAFA meets from Oregon, coupled with new professional responsibilities, our children becoming adults, and our becoming grandparents, meant that attending the NAFA meets was put on a back-burner for over a decade, except for several intermittent years, but we really did miss attending and reconnecting with friends each year.

Sue and I therefore decided that attending the NAFA meet in Oklahoma was something we wanted to do. We chose to fly rather than drive, even though COVID cases were still very active and meant travel from Oregon to Oklahoma would take some patience. We checked the time it would take to drive from our home to the meet, and it would have been a two to three day trip if the weather was good. Our home in Bend often has extremely snowy and icy weather by the end of November, so if that happened, highway travel could take even longer. We booked a room at the meet hotel and purchased airline tickets to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, then we reserved



Lynn Dollar and Sue Cecchini at NAFA Friday Banquet



Incoming NAFA president, Martin Geleynse and Dan at the Banquet

a rental car. We were ready to go and excited about the prospect of being back at a NAFA meet!

The trip to the meet was uneventful, but tedious with the FAA mask requirements at airports and on the planes. Once we got to Oklahoma City Airport, we got our rental car, put away our masks for the duration of our stay and started the two to three hour car trip to Lone Wolf. We arrived at the meet venue well after dark. It was great to have the NAFA Meet in Oklahoma in 2021, since the state had dropped all COVID mandates, including mask mandates and gathering size restrictions in early 2021. Coming from a state like Oregon, with extreme COVID lockdowns, it was very refreshing!



The Dollars, Hortons, and Cecchins enjoying dinner at the Back Door Steakhouse

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



We checked into the hotel and headed to our room, noticing on our walk to it that the hotel seemed to have a very nice complex of facilities. The next morning after we woke, we got ready and headed down to the breakfast dining area for the meet. We enjoyed reconnecting with good friends that we hadn't seen for a number of years and, since we didn't get settled into our room the night before until after midnight, Sue and I were anxious to look around the venue and surrounding area in the daylight. After sitting so long during the long day of travel the day before, we enjoyed a long walk, taking in the gorgeous scenery and wildlife, although it was clear that the water level in the lake was extremely low. After participating in over 35 such meets since the late 1970s, we thought this was one of the most picturesque locations we've ever had the pleasure of attending for a NAFA meet.

The venue was the lodge complex of the Quartz Mountain State Park, which is up against the shores of Lake Altus-Lugert. After a fire destroyed the lodge in 1995, it was rebuilt and reopened in 2001. The entire complex was fully renovated and remodelled just weeks before the beginning of the 2021 NAFA Meet. The views from inside the buildings, as well as while walking around the complex and on the connected walking paths, were really nice. White-tailed deer, waterfowl and other wildlife were all residents of the venue and could be seen regularly.

Spending a lot of time at the NAFA meet visiting with our good and very long-time friends from Michigan and Colorado respectively, the Dollars and Hortons, as well as many friends from across the country, was really wonderful. Being in a big beef producing state like Oklahoma, we got a great recommendation from meet co-chair Rob Huber's wife, Julie, for a steak house in the nearby town of Altus. With our dearest friends in tow, we headed to the Back Door Steakhouse; the beef was outstanding, and the hospitality of the staff was great; it reminded me of what most of America was like just a few short years ago.

Area
surrounding
the lodge



DAN
CECCHINI

Dan began flying hawks in 1970 and has successfully flown most American falconry hawks and falcons at quarry since then. Dan is currently the IAF vice-president for N. America, a member of the IUCN CEM/SUME Commission and a Board Member of the *North American Grouse Partnership*. Previously to becoming IAF VP for the Americas, he served as the IAF delegate for the USA. He is a past president and vice-president of NAFA, and along with his wife Sue, was the co-editor of the *NAFA Journal* for 20 years. Dan was a co-founder and the first treasurer of the *Michigan Hawking Club* in 1972. He was also a co-founder of the *Texas Hawking Association* in 1983, and he has served as a President of the *Oregon Falconers Association*. Falconry has always been Dan's avocation, and he feels very fortunate to have been able to share it over the decades with his family (Sue, Danny and Amelia) and now with his grandchildren (Jace and Hank).

Mentally, it was a bit difficult being at a NAFA meet without my own hawks and falcons to hunt with or without our "kids" who always attended meets with us, but it gave me more time to visit with old friends and make a couple of new friends, too. Except for the COVID mask experience on the plane trip out and back, the entire trip was great, and we'll remember it fondly. I want to thank all of the NAFA volunteers, past and present, living and past, who have made NAFA the premier falconry organisation it is. I'm confident it will continue to be in the future!

One line from the proceedings recorded by Tom Smylie of the 1st NAFA conclave still stands out and is as important today as it was 60 years ago. "It is with the young people that the sport will keep its tradition."

References:

- S. Kent Carnie: *NAFA Journal 2021: A Brief History of Falconry in North America*, pp 10-14.
NAFA website: <http://www.n-a-f-a.com>
NAFA Hawk Chalk I (1): 7-10, 1962.



The History of the *Deutscher Falkenorden* (1921 - 2021)

*Hans-Albrecht Hewicker,
Honorary Chairman of the Deutscher Falkenorden e.V.*

The later history of falconry in Central Europe and its demise (17th to mid-19th century).

During the Baroque period, the ostentatious and very costly practice of hawking herons (*Ardea cinerea*) and kites (*Milvus milvus* and *Milvus migrans*) using gyrfalcons (*Falco rusticolus*) and peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) was prevalent at the royal courts of Europe. Such hawking was practised by professional falconers who were in the service of the courts. These falconers often hailed from the small town of Valkenswaard in Brabant (the Netherlands). The high demand for gyrfalcons was satisfied by imports, primarily from Northern Europe. The king of Denmark, who also ruled Iceland and Norway at the time, played a key role along with the falcon trappers from the Netherlands.

Social changes that occurred during the Enlightenment and its prelude, as well as changes in conjunction with the French Revolution, led to the rapid cessation of falconry in Central Europe in the late 18th century. Additionally, the improvement of firearms which henceforth made it possible to accurately bring down birds in flight played a role in its demise. Finally, falconry almost became extinct in the 19th century, a fact which the short-lived *Loo Hawking Club* in Holland (1839-1855) was not able to change. However, it was in this period that a grand book on falconry originated: the *Traité de Fauconnerie*, written in French by Schlegel and Verster van Wulverhorst (1845-1852). (Fig. 1)

The revival of falconry in Germany (from the mid-19th century onwards)

The failed German revolution in the spring of 1848 led to changes in the field of hunting law as regalian hunting rights (linking hunting law to the exercise of power) were removed and hunting rights became tied to property instead. At the beginning of the 1850s, the aforementioned policy was supplemented by the principle that the exercise of hunting required a certain minimum area (the so-called hunting domain system).

These two principles of hunting law have survived in Germany up to the present day.

The mentioned changes to hunting law led to the situation that new sections of society – primarily farmers and citizens – could now become hunters, resulting in a debasement of hunting methods which led, in turn, to an endangerment of game animal populations. For these reasons, from the 1860s, there were constant calls for the ennoblement of hunting, and especially for adherence to the hunting code of ethics and, hence, for consideration of the notion of animal protection. In the process, falconry appeared to be a particularly ethical

Fig. 1.
Frontispiece
of *Traité de
Fauconnerie*
(1845-1853).

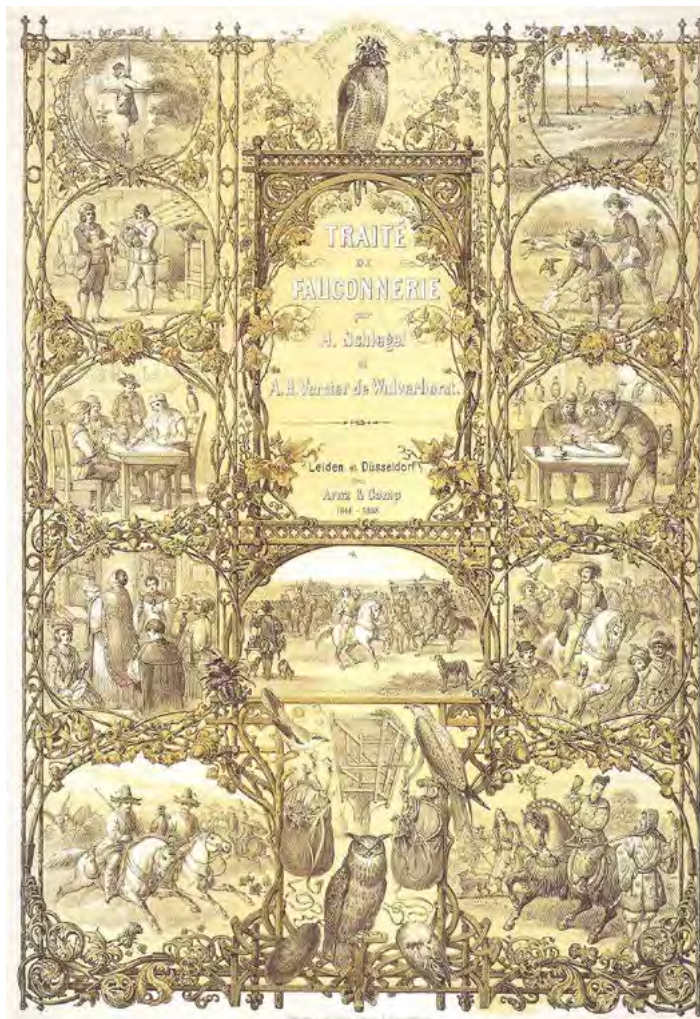




Fig. 2. Christoph Gustav Moritz Freiherr von Biedermann (1862-1913).

and fair method of hunting which was not contingent upon large game bags and financial revenues and whose revival therefore seemed to be very desirable.

The idea of reviving falconry characterised many writings from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (Hewicker, 1998). Instrumental in this effort were August Friedrich Hector Schöppfer (1811-1885) with his *Neues Waidmannsbuch* ("New Huntsman's Book") (Tryberg, 1874) and his translation of the *De arte venandi cum avibus* by Frederick II (Schöppfer, 1896), along with Christoph Gustav Moritz Freiherr von Biedermann (1862-1913) (Fig. 2) with his founding of a large library on falconry and his plan for an extensive work on falconry (Klüh, 2014), (cf. also Müller-Röder, 1906).

Freiherr von Biedermann (1862-1913), who died at an early age, had certainly been the individual to most intensively concern himself with his own hawks and directly with the practice of falconry. In addition, Reiner Corneli must also be mentioned here for promoting the return of falconry by organising demonstrations by an Irish falconer within the framework of the First International Hunting Exhibition in Kleve in 1881, which he had initiated. The wide-ranging description of falconry in the work commemorating this exhibition was also excellent publicity for the sport. (Corneli, 1884).

At the suggestion of the Prussian forest superintendent Conrad Schöppfer (the son of the aforementioned Hector Schöppfer), Count Christian Ernest of Stolberg-Wernigerode (1864-1940) brought the English falconer Mr. Frost to Germany for presentations in the autumn of 1904, which then took place in various domains, especially in eastern Germany. At the conclusion of this demonstration trip, the count purchased Mr. Frost's falcons and founded a "falconry cooperative" whose chairman he himself became.

However, it seems it only existed for a short while and few details are known concerning it. (Haarhaus, 1922).

At the beginning of the new century, however, Dr. Erwin Detmers (1888-1912), a highly committed falconry enthusiast, appeared before the public when, at the age of 17, he published his first book titled "The care, taming, training and reproduction of birds of prey in captivity, A textbook for professionals and laypeople." (Detmers, 1905) It was a book dedicated to falconry and the study and protection of birds of prey. Thus, from a conceptual point of view, he was a direct forerunner of the founding of the DFO. On top of that, he was probably the first in the world to deal with the systematic breeding of birds of prey in captivity. His early death at the age of 24, when the German Arctic Expedition failed in 1912, ended in a highly tragic way the scientific career that had given rise to such great hopes.

The Deutscher Falkenorden (DFO; from 1921 onwards)

The foundation of the *Deutscher Falkenorden* originates from the initiative of the German neurologist Friedrich Jungklaus, MD & PhD (1875-1953). As a physician trained in psychology and as a cultural scientist, he was interested in the relationship between humans and animals, which ultimately brought him to falconry. His first publications on falconry in a hunting magazine in 1919 brought him into contact with the doctor and hunter Dr. Fritz Engelman (1874-1935) who, since his youth, had been a bird of prey enthusiast. These two intensively pushed the efforts to re-establish falconry in Germany. They gathered other interested people around them, such as the art student Renz Waller (1895-1979), Dr. Hermann Kreyenborg (1889-1963) and Prof. Dr. Johannes Thienemann (1863-1938), who then was already famous for being the founder of the first ornithological station in the world (at Rossitten). (Fig. 3)

The *Deutscher Falkenorden* was founded in Berlin in 1921 and its first general meeting took place in Leipzig in 1923. At the start of 1924, the membership directory already contained 186 registered members, including persons from various European countries as well as from Australia and the USA. The members included directors of zoological gardens and well-known scientists, such as Professor Lutz Heck (1892-1983) and the ornithologists Dr. Erwin Stresemann (1889-1972) and Dr. Oskar Heinroth (1871-1945).

Fig. 3. Dr. Friedrich Jungklaus (1875-1953) and Renz Waller (1895-1979) hawking with a goshawk.



The *Deutscher Falkenorden e.V., Vereinigung für Falknerei, Raubvogelschutz und -kunde* (“Deutscher Falkenorden, registered association for falconry and the protection and study of birds of prey”), or DFO, had – as the association’s original full name indicates – not only set itself the goal of reviving practical falconry, but also dedicated itself to the then new notion of protection of birds of prey, as well as to the exploration of their natural history and historico-cultural significance. The foundation of the DFO encouraged people in other European countries and in North America to concern themselves with this special method of hunting and to take it up again. In 1968, the DFO in Düsseldorf co-initiated and co-founded the *International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey* (IAF).

Under the Nazi regime, the DFO found acceptance and support for its goals. A decisive step was the introduction of the falconer’s hunting license through the Reich Hunting Law of 1934 on a proposal from the DFO and, thus, legal cover for falconry. However, such successes could only be achieved through integration into the prevalent system. This legal cover for falconry was further expanded in the 1980s through the introduction of the falconer assessment test which, in addition to the hunter’s test, became a prerequisite for attaining the falconry hunting license. Strict regulations on the keeping of birds of prey also came into force.

Today, the DFO is the oldest and one of the largest falconry associations in the world, having around 1,600 members. However, only a small number of members actively pursue hawking because many lack

the prerequisites for keeping hawks properly and for practising the art itself or because they have a more general interest in birds of prey and falconry. Since 1924, the association has also been working as a publisher, e.g. by issuing its yearbook, which has been published since 1988 under the title *Greifvögel und Falknerei* (“Birds of Prey and Falconry”) (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Cover picture of the DFO yearbook, 2016.



Fig. 5. Certificate of inclusion of falconry in Germany in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Ever since its inception, one of the main goals of the DFO has been the protection of birds of prey. The dramatic decline of raptor populations following the Second World War on account of environmental pollutants (especially DDT) led to falconers' efforts towards human-assisted breeding of birds of prey, with Renz Waller having succeeded in breeding peregrines as early as 1942/1943. Following the first successes in the early 1970s, a systematic breeding programme for peregrines was developed in Germany in parallel with the USA and Canada, and was transferred in a step-by-step manner to other bird of prey species too.

Over the years, DFO members have bred thousands of peregrines of which more than 1,300 have been released into the wild via reintroduction programmes to reestablish the once almost extinct wild population. A successful cooperation with Polish falconers is dedicated to the reintroduction of peregrines into the wild in Poland. Similar efforts have been undertaken for the white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) which today again has stable breeding populations in Germany.

The notion of protection of birds of prey also expresses itself in nursing stations for raptors which are run by numerous falconers in Germany. Following the treatment of sick or injured animals, the birds of prey are subsequently prepared for life in the wild using falconry methods and finally released into the wild. Due

to its intensive commitment to nature conservation in general and to birds of prey in particular, the DFO has been recognised as a nature conservation association by the German Federal Government. In 2014, falconry was included in the nationwide directory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Germany, followed by its inclusion in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on 1st December 2016 (Fig. 5), along with 17 other countries. In the meantime, another six countries have joined, so that today UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity includes falconry from 24 countries. This makes falconry the cultural element with by far the largest number of framework nations in the now extraordinarily extensive UNESCO list.

REFERENCES

- Corneli, R. (1884). *Die Jagd und ihre Wandlungen in Wort und Bild*. Amsterdam: Ellermann, Harms & Cie.
- Detmers, E. (1905). *Die Pflege, Zählung, Abrichtung und Fortpflanzung der Raubvögel in der Gefangenschaft. Ein Lehrbuch für Fachleute und Laien*. Berlin: Fritz Pfennigstorff.
- Haarhaus, J. (1923). *Deutsche Beizjäger des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Velhagen & Klasings Monatshefte, 1922/23, II: 519-528.
- Hewicker, H.-A. (1999). 'Zur Vorgeschichte der Gründung des Deutschen Falkenordens'. *Greifvögel und Falknerei* 1998: 12-32.
- Klüh, P. N. (2014). *Deutsche Falkner im 20. Jahrhundert, I*, Beizjagd.de special issue 4. Darmstadt: Verlag Peter N. Klüh.
- Müller-Röder, E. (1906). *Die Beizjagd und der Falkensport in alter und neuer Zeit*. Leipzig: Ernst Rust.
- Schlegel, H. & Verster van Wulverhorst, A.H. (1845-1853). *Traité de Fauconnerie*. Leiden und Düsseldorf: Arnz & Co.
- Schöpffer, A.F.H. (1896). *Des Hohenstaufenkaisers Friedrich II Bücher von der Natur der Vögel und der Falknerei mit den Zusätzen des Königs Manfred*. Translated from Latin by H. Schöpffer. Berlin: Paul Parey.
- Tryberg, C. (i.e. Hector Schöpffer) (1874). *Neues Waidmannsbuch. Jagdkunde zur Förderung guter Wildpflege und würdiger Jagdfreuden*. Leipzig: Heinrich Schmidt.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



HANS-ALBRECHT
HEWICKER

Hans-Albrecht Hewicker, born in 1943, studied forestry in Göttingen (Germany) and Zurich (Switzerland). He served as head of a state forestry office in Schleswig-Holstein for 30 years and has been involved in many different forms of hunting. Since 1974, he has held various functions in the DFO: Vice-President from 1978-2014, President from 2014-2018 and is, today, Honorary President of DFO. From 1985 until the present, he has been Editor of the DFO yearbook *Greifvögel und Falknerei*.

An 800-year-old Historical Falconry Image Discovered in Norway

Ellen Hagen, Norway

In December 2021, various Norwegian media announced the unique find of an 800-year-old knife handle with a falconry image. Archaeologists from the *Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage* (NIKU) discovered the knife handle while digging in the Old Town (Gamlebyen) of Oslo.

The handle, presumably made of either antler, bone, or walrus ivory, is very well preserved and shows many small details kept over the eight centuries it has been buried. When they noticed that the figure was holding a bird of prey and saw the crown on the head, they knew this belonged to royalty; a queen, princess or prince, or even the king himself. It is still to be determined if the image is of a man or woman, but art historian Kjartan Hauglid at NIKU has confirmed that the hairstyle and clothes date back 800 years.

The details on the knife handle could link it to the reign of Håkon Håkonsson. He was King of Norway from 1217-1263 and had contact with the Holy Roman Emperor and falconer Frederick II, who even wrote a description about the large, Norwegian raptors in

his comprehensive falconry book *De arte venandi cum avibus* (1240s). In 1258, Håkon's daughter Kristina was married to Don Felipe, the brother of Spanish King Alfonso X, creating an alliance between the royal courts in Norway and Castilla in Spain. For the wedding, which was a riding party that travelled all the way from the chilly North to the warmer South of Europe, there are records that the travelling procession included falcons, forming part of their wedding dowry. Perhaps the knife belonged to Håkon, or to his daughter or son?

As more historical falconry objects see the light, or the attention of national media, it will help gather a deeper insight into the still fragmented history of falconry in Norway.

Oldest depiction of its kind?

Although the handle is a rare depiction of a falconry motif in Norway, there are older images and references to falconry in Norse society than this recent find. Unfortunately, due to challenging preservation conditions, archaeological finds are few. However, the Alstad runic stone is a depiction from the Viking Age of a hunt with man, horses, and hounds. The man has a falcon on his hand which he casts off, and which can be found again flying to the top of the stone just as a falcon would climb to a perch before the stoop. Falcons were even associated with the Norse goddess Freya, another tribute to the female aspect of the falcon being larger and more powerful than the tiercel, the male. Falconry in Nordic Medieval times was an aristocratic activity, excluding its practice by common folk. Furthermore, falcons of the Northern hemisphere, from, for instance, Greenland, Iceland, and Norway, were highly sought after both for alliances and in trade. For centuries, these falcons were exclusively one of the most important economic commodities in the kingdoms of Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

What happened to falconry in Norway?

The actual practice of falconry in Norway eventually faded away at the end of the Medieval period as the



Photo of the latest knife handle from Oslo. Photo credit: Ann-Ingeborg Floa Grindhaug and Jani Causevic, NIKU.



Photo of previous knife handle found in Oslo. Photo credit: Cultural History Museum, Oslo. Museums number C23825. From Gersmann & Grimm's publication *Raptor and human* (2018).

Kingdom of Norway fell under the reign of Denmark and, later, Sweden. Activities like actual hawking were shifted to the new rulers and their home countries, while the activity that remained was hawk trapping due to the economic value which exporting hawks provided monarchs during the time European falconry was at its historical peak. Eventually, any links to falconry faded entirely in Norway and, in the 1970s, the sport was banned in Norway as a result of a century and half of predator persecution, during which all raptor species were driven to near extinction. Up until that point, the export of falcons had functioned as a conservation programme as all birds exported had to be manually applied for by any ruling monarch of the Scandinavian countries. Tax records from ships' logs have, furthermore, documented both where exported falcons came from and to which country they were sent. Norwegians in general today stigmatise falconry, although falconry itself has never been of any threat to the natural species; the reason raptor numbers declined was Norwegian predator politics which aimed to wipe out all predators. This mentality still exists, and there are hostile attitudes to all the main predators, including all types of birds of prey, despite the fact that there is a law that today protects them.

A second knife handle

Another knife handle has long been in the digital museum archives in Norway, but this knife handle is of a person with no crown and is more worn than the newest find. It was also found in the Old Town (Gamlebyen) of Oslo, meaning there are two falconry knives in close proximity, enhancing the presence of falconry activity at the time. The knife handle was delivered to the museum collection in 1903. Among other objects found is a small bell of bronze. Unfortunately, there was not an uploaded photo of the bell, but it could be one of very few falconry bells yet uncovered in Norway. Further investigation of these finds is needed.

Media attention to the knife handle in 2021 has brought positive exposure of the topic of falconry in Norway at a level not previously reached by other notable academic achievements, such as the advanced publications *Raptor and human* (2018) and *Raptor on the fist* (2020). Apart from historical finds and publications showing the importance falconry had in Norwegian history, Marthe Holgersen Kjørkleiv and I founded the first ever *Norwegian Falconry Association* in 2019 to help advocate for practical falconry with a knowledge and voice it has not had since Medieval times. It could very well be that as these historical falconry objects get more attention, it will help spread both an interest and awareness that could possibly bring falconry back to Norway.

Ellen Hagen

IAF Norwegian delegate

IAF *Women's Working Group*

President of *Norwegian Falconry Association*

Museum educator

Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger

contact: Ellen.hagen@uis.no



ELLEN
HAGEN

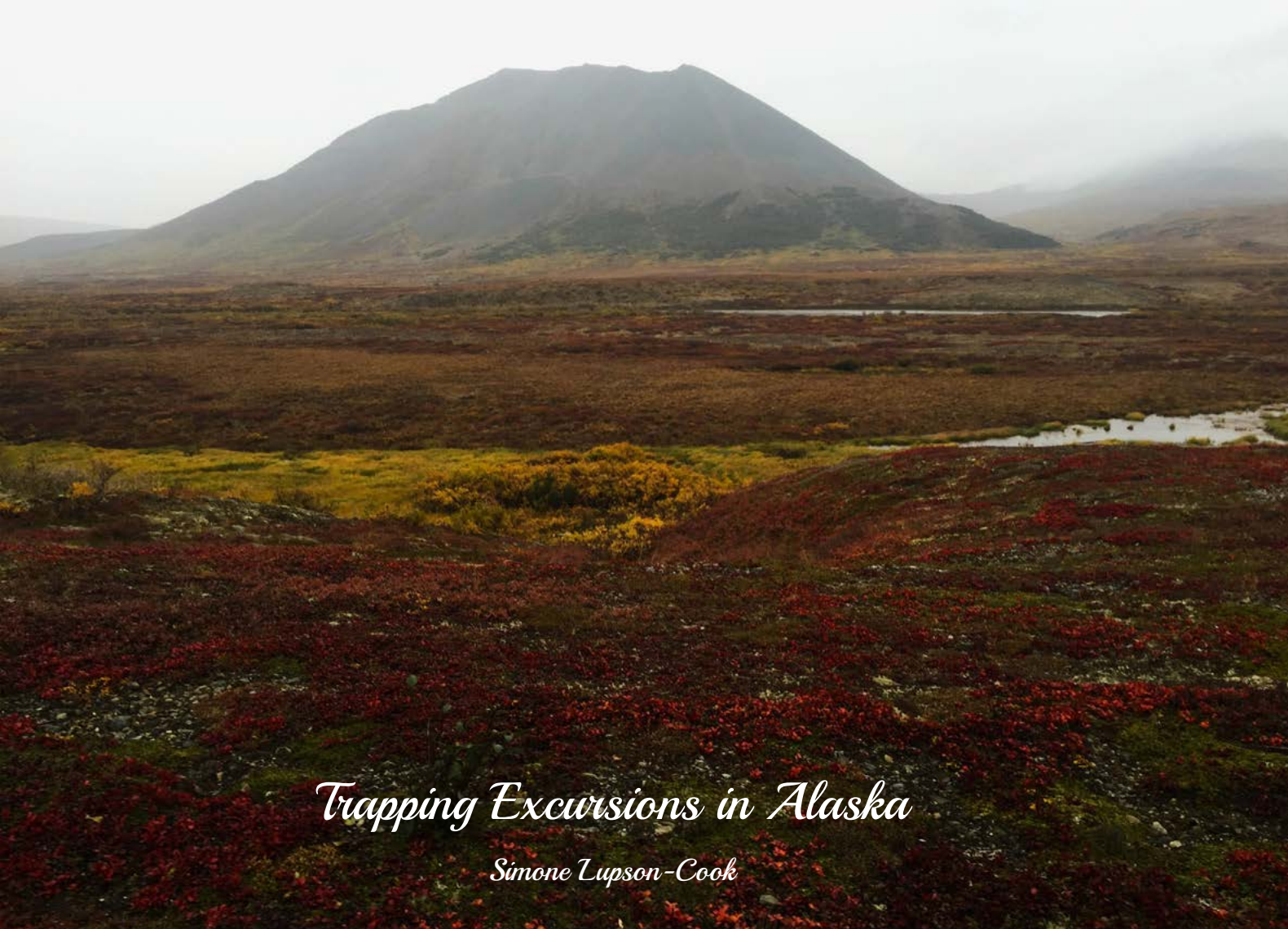
Ellen Hagen is a museum educator at *Arkeologisk Museum, University of Stavanger* in Norway, and teaches local prehistory spanning 15,000 years to the public. Hagen is also the founder of the *Norwegian Falconry Association*, and Norway's only certified falconer.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian





Trapping Excursions in Alaska

Simone Lupson-Cook

Starting in 2015, the state of Alaska began allocating three (this was changed to five in 2018) non-resident take permits for falconry trapping. Through applying every year, I have been lucky enough to travel to Alaska multiple times in the fall, either with a non-resident permit myself or with other permit winners, as several of my friends have also drawn permits. My first trip to Alaska was a dream come true, since travel to remote places is always a thrill, but each and every trip has truly been wondrous and unique. Alaska is still so wild compared to many places in the lower 48, with commanding views and abundant wildlife. We've been fortunate to see an incredible array of wild animals, including lynx, bears, wolves, whales and even an incredibly rare sighting of a white-tailed sea eagle. We have also been fortunate to have trapped hawks for falconry in Alaska, while enjoying amazing hunting and fishing opportunities at the same time, despite the logistical challenges unique to this remote state.

The complicated logistics of a trapping trip in rural Alaska have required months-long endeavours of gathering gear, making lists, researching and planning. It is not uncommon for our gear to take up multiple

large boxes and bins; one year we brought so much gear, we filled up an Alaskan friend's flatbed trailer! Supplies can not only be hard or impossible to acquire but can be extremely expensive as well, especially in a rural town. One year we were scrambling for supplies for our return flight home and not only did we wind up spending \$36.00 on a roll of duct tape, but we were also lucky to find the last one for sale. After that lesson, we try to bring almost everything we need from traps to zip ties to crates for shipping hawks and even batteries.

Trapping hawks in Alaska can be a boom-and-bust situation depending on weather and other factors. Some years we've had two gyrfalcons and two goshawks making passes at our bait and other years we have gone more than two weeks without seeing a passage hawk. If the weather is still warm, many raptors are hard to trap because they are fat and there is still an abundance of easy prey such as Arctic ground squirrels. Other years the weather deteriorates overnight, prey species disappear, followed shortly by the raptors, and travel becomes difficult if not impossible in some cases. When we arrived in Alaska in early September on our very first trip, in 2015, the temperature was well



Willow ptarmigan blending in with its surroundings

below freezing with poor visibility. But the days were still long (sunset was near 10:00 pm) and, shortly after arriving, the weather broke. In a brief time, we saw several passage hawks that were so interested in robbing each other that they were impossible to catch. After this the weather turned again, and we didn't have another opportunity to trap again for over a week and a half. We woke on our last trapping day to clear skies and, within an hour or so, we saw and trapped a nice passage gyrfalcon. Within 12 hours, the weather had again turned so violent that flights were cancelled for the next day due to poor visibility and wind.

Sometimes things lined up just right on these trapping trips, and we were successful, but most of the time circumstances got in the way of a successful trapping set. It's amazing how many things can reduce the odds of success. Good weather is essential in order to spot hawks and have a chance at a decent setup, but too good and they don't tend to be hungry or they are likely to be up thermalling out of sight. Good

numbers of prey species are important in order to attract migrating raptors but too many and they won't even notice your set. Good timing is important in order to catch the migration just right so there are hawks to catch, but too many raptors means reduced success due to pirating behaviour. All you can do is shoot for the best general time frame and cross your fingers.

By the end of September, in normal years, wildlife is abundant and active and the raptor migration is in full swing. Gyrfalcons, peregrines and northern goshawks can often be seen inland and near the coast, hunting ptarmigan, ducks, ground squirrels, lemmings and voles. September is also when huge flocks of sandhill cranes from Siberia begin to stage their migration as well. Large flocks of cackling geese and American widgeon bob in the estuaries while the cranes fly overhead with their distinct calls. Tundra swans are also abundant in the fall; small family groups can often be seen feeding and resting together. You never know what you may see when you start your day in the Alaskan wilderness.

Ptarmigan are charismatic tundra grouse. In the fall, they are graced with beautiful shades of gold, red, black and white, and large flocks of them can often be seen resting in the willows or feeding on forbes and berries near the willow patches. Red foxes are not uncommon and moose and bears are often a regular sight. Even so, things will always vary from year to year. For example, although the salmon run was poor last year (2021), the Arctic grayling were bountiful and easy to catch. These

Flock of willow ptarmigan surrounded by fall colors on the tundra





beautiful fish do not freeze or even stay in the fridge well and must be eaten the same day they are caught. On the previous trip, we did not see any bears, but last year we saw multiple bears, including some large boars and females with cubs. The blueberries were so plentiful that our shoes and pants were stained purple from walking across the landscape. Each year can be incredibly variable but there is always amazing wildlife to see and adventures to be had.

The tundra in the fall is a mesmerising array of yellows, reds, greens and golds, and last year was no exception. There is an abundance of water in this landscape in the form of estuaries, lagoons, streams, rivers and wetlands. To describe Alaska as vast does not even begin to paint the picture. It's hard to imagine how far the landscape stretches on, with snow-capped peaks in the distance and rivers and valleys for as far as the eye can see. Because of the sheer size of the country, and rapidly changing weather, travelling in rural Alaska is always an adventure. We are lucky that the area in which we trap has a fair road system. However, the roads in the fall are heavily pot-holed and mud, snow and ice are often a hindrance. A simple light snowfall can impede travel, depending on your vehicle. The weather can also change fast. We've been hiking in sunlight and decent temperatures only to have a front roll in and start spitting snow, sleet and sideways rain that lasted for days. The uncertainty of travel, the difficulty of logistics and the varying number of raptors makes every single trip unique but, for me, that is part of the thrill. Whether a trip results in the successful capture of a passage hawk or not, boring is one word I would never use to describe a trip to Alaska!

One blustery day, as we were driving up the road to town, we spotted a passage gyrfalcon flying along the hillsides. By the time we pulled over, he was kiting away downwind in the far distance. Our determined flagging finally brought him all the way upwind, but by the time we presented the bait and got in the car, he was already heading back downwind. We repeated the process several times and finally kept his attention long enough that we were able to make a set and get away. We had gone quite some time without seeing a passage hawk, and this bird was now clearly interested. I thought to myself that, surely, we would catch him. He made a couple of passes at the bait and then landed next to it. We've seen this multiple times, especially with gyrfalcons and often the falcon will end up running up and grabbing the bait after it becomes comfortable with the situation and confident that it is safe. All of a sudden, however, the gyrfalcon spooked and took off straight downwind, clearly uninterested in our setup now. The reason for his departure became clear as, in that moment, out of the willows near our set, ambled a female muskox. She plodded towards our bait, sniffed its head and then spooked herself, running back into the willows where she had emerged. The gyrfalcon was far downwind by now and had decided to take off over the hills again despite our best efforts. Never did I think I would have a trapping set ruined by a muskox of all things! Occasionally though, things do work out.

In 2016, my partner, Joel, drew a non-resident permit and ended up trapping a female northern goshawk. We had never had an Alaskan goshawk in hand before,

Muskox
on the
tundra





Joel with his
2015 passage
gyrfalcon

and she turned out to be a very special hawk. She was trained using the strobe light method as taught to us by Steve Layman and remained very calm throughout her entire career. Having used the strobe light on all of our wild taken Alaska hawks, and many other passage and captive reared birds, we would do it no other way. The idea with strobe light training is to minimise stress to the hawk while also avoiding the need for weight reduction. When the bird is trapped, we wear gear so that it does not recognise us as a human; we cover our faces, hands and bodies, hood the hawk immediately and try not to talk during the initial trapping time. Once home, the hawk is offered a full meal on the fist in the strobe light with the flash at a low rate of speed. This allows the bird to see the food in our hands but not much else. The newly trapped hawk will typically eat readily and calmly with tight feathers and a relaxed demeanour. The next day we progress to offering tidbits of food as we slowly turn the flash rate a tiny bit up. Now the hawk can see that a hand is offering tidbits but not much more. We progress with offering tidbits in faster and faster flashing, making sure the hawk never shows any fear. If we see fear, we go back a step or two and turn the flash rate down. We have had wild-trapped Alaskan birds making restrained pursuits in full light, five days from the trap, without having taken a single bite, with no fear displayed and no weight reduction.

The strobe method has been used with a gyrfalcon, female gyrfalcons and a female goshawk, all with the same results. Aspergillosis, of course, is a real fear with these Arctic birds, and the strobe has made the stress

of capture non-existent in our experience. Along with no stress and no weight reduction, the chance of asper drops dramatically. We also treat prophylactically with Voriconazole (an antifungal) for two weeks to further reduce any possibility of asper in the hawk. The result of this strobe training is a bomb proof bird, which has no underlying stress issues and has always viewed the falconer as a positive presence.

We had the pleasure of taking the goshawk we caught in 2016 back up to Alaska with us the following year when I drew my first permit. By that point, she had caught cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hares, black-tailed jackrabbits, pheasants and ducks in the lower 48. Upon arriving in Alaska, it took a couple of weeks for the willow ptarmigan to start showing up in the places we were used to finding them. However, once we could find the ptarmigan, and figured out how to hawk them, *Alma* the goshawk was on a roll. One tactic that we found helpful was to walk through the thick and gnarled willow thickets to approach a flock of ptarmigan foraging near the far edge. In this direct manner, they never flushed prematurely from the sound, perhaps because they were used to large animals such as muskox and bears in the willows and were more concerned about what was in the sky rather than what was in the brush. Either way, we were able to get some wonderfully successful flights in this manner with *Alma* on the fist as we pushed our way through the willows.

On other occasions *Alma* would leave the fist in pursuit and if she missed during the initial flush, she



Willow ptarmigan molting into winter plumage



Pair of
gyrfalcons
on a cliff

would course back and forth looking for stragglers hiding in the willows. Often, she would punch down through the willows after spotting a hiding ptarmigan and she found success a time or two using this tactic, which she had clearly learned as a young hawk. It was obvious she had successfully hunted ptarmigan before in her native habitat and knew how to succeed, taking ten during our time there as well as two snowshoe hares. We were happy to have caught them, and it was a fun diversion from the pressure I felt to fill my permit, since this was the first year that I was trapping for myself.

In 2017, after two years of unsuccessfully applying, my name was drawn. I was hoping for a gyrkin or perhaps even a goshawk but trapping was very difficult that year. We saw passage hawks here and there but nothing was lining up in our favour. A beautiful blonde gyrkin came into our setup but did not get caught. We reset with a noose carpet and he somehow flipped it over and then wandered away to chase leaves blowing in the wind. A passage female goshawk flashed into view and landed close by, only to take off to crab with a raven and miss seeing the bait. A gyrkin landed in front of us and, when Joel jumped over a hummock to set the bait, he wound up on his hands and knees in grass that turned out to be flooded with a foot of water. The gyrkin disappeared to parts unknown while Joel ran back to get things reset.

Another gyrkin put on an incredible display in pursuit of a snow bunting, which took refuge under our vehicle, and immediately went after our pigeon only to be flushed off by curious passers-by. Upon seeing a beautiful passage bird chasing ptarmigan, we flagged her over, only to find that what appeared to be

level ground was in fact deeply furrowed with bait-sized holes. The pigeon promptly disappeared and the falcon wandered off before we could reset. As frustrating as these occurrences were, we would look back on them with nostalgia when one of the infamous dry spells arrived that would see us go over two weeks without seeing a single passage bird.

We decided to extend our trip several times in the hopes that maybe we would finally connect with a passage hawk. One morning, at the end of our latest extension, we got a late start, yet decided it was still worth getting breakfast. After stopping at our favourite bakery in town, we loaded up with pastries and hit the road shortly after dawn. As we drove to the field to begin our search for hawks, we saw a beautiful, large falcon flash to our left, flying low over the tundra. We scrambled to get a bait bird out of the car in time to catch her attention but she was making a beeline somewhere else and paid us no attention. We hit the gas and struggled to make up for lost miles while we hoped we were heading in the right general direction, and eventually came around a bend in the road to see that she had landed low and off to our right. We stopped short, jumped out of the car and luckily found a flat spot and deployed a trap. We could see for miles up and down the road and had a good view of the bait. In a place where you can go hours without seeing another vehicle, a sure guarantee of traffic is a trap set with an interested gyrfalcon.

In our rear-view mirror we could see a truck rumbling our way from a long way out. After six weeks of trapping, I cringed at the thought of a random interruption tipping the odds against trapping a hawk

yet again. We knew that she was sitting close enough to the road that a passing vehicle could very well bump her. Joel thought it was worth a shot to ask the driver if he might wait to see if this bird would get caught. He hopped out of the car and, as we have found time and time again in rural Alaska, the friendly driver was more than happy to oblige. After hearing that we were attempting to trap a hawk, the gentleman said that since his main goal was to drive around and drink his coffee, he was more than happy to wait with us. While Joel chatted with the truck driver I watched as the falcon had now flown over and landed six feet from the trap. Of course, the pigeon froze at this point and soon the gyrfalcon lost interest and even turned her back to the bait and started scanning the horizon. My hopes plummeted that we would get this beautiful bird in hand, and after what seemed like forever,

I took my eyes off the set for a split second to check the rear-view mirror. When I looked back, an entirely different passage gyrfalcon was standing tall near the first falcon! At first, I wasn't sure what was going on but then realised that the original gyrfalcon had grabbed the bait when the second passage bird showed up! And of course, at this moment, from the opposite direction of the stopped truck, another vehicle came into view.

Simone with
a passage
gyrfalcon
trapped
in 2017



Anticipating that the approaching car would certainly bump the birds, we decided to drive up to arrive ahead of the approaching vehicle and to be in a position to deploy a noose carpet if needed. The second gyrfalcon bumped as we arrived and the original falcon took off to follow her towards the horizon, only to suddenly flounder back to earth, and we realised she was trapped! I could hardly believe that after six weeks of hard trapping we were about to have a bird in hand. We jumped out of the car and secured the falcon. She was caught by just the tip of one toe. As we knelt down and hooded her, the man in the first truck drove by wearing a huge grin and giving two thumbs up. Alaska locals seem to have seen it all! We plan to bring this big girl (she was trapped at four pounds) back up to Alaska to hawk as well someday, but that will require a separate trip later in the season since flying a falcon in the fall around the thousands of migrating waterfowl, in a region with a poor road grid, can be a recipe for disaster.

Besides the thrill of trapping hawks and seeing them in hand, observing the thousands of migrating waterfowl is a wonderful treat as well. Multiple scenes of gyrfalcons hunting waterfowl in the wild are forever etched in my mind. One amazing instance was when I observed a particularly tame adult silver gyrkin. We kept bumping into each other as I travelled down the road, and he would appear and reappear as I slowly made my way to my destination, looking for passage hawks. Near the end of the morning, he appeared again; flying along the road and eventually alighting nearby. I snapped some photos, and he didn't seem to mind my presence at all. I continued to watch him after I got some nice shots when, all of a sudden, he took off over the ocean. He was perhaps several hundred



yards from the shore when I realised he was gaining quickly on two dark birds over the water. As my mind tried to catch up with what was happening I, at first, thought they were ravens and then assumed they must be cormorants since I had never seen ravens fly so close to the water. However, as the gyrkin closed in I realised they were cackling geese and, before I knew it, the gyrkin had grabbed one of the geese with one foot, while the goose was panicking and flailing upside down. This lasted only moments and then the gyrkin let go, peeled off towards the shore and proceeded to chase ravens along the cliff, mirroring their twists and turns in the updrafts in the wind along the cliff face. I don't know for certain what the gyrkin was thinking, but I believe it may have been purely an act of play and he was just feeling confident, the king of his domain.

Another instance of a wild gyrfalcon hunting occurred just last year. We watched a white passage female gyrfalcon with her back to us, slightly hunched and looking out over a bay filled with waterfowl. Large flocks of American wigeon, pintails and common mergansers dotted the water. The female gyrfalcon eventually left her post and made a direct line of flight towards a large flock of mergansers. I have seen gyrfalcons take off like this before and, in what almost seems like a joke, blow through a flock of ducks then keep going as if they are purely reminding the ducks to stay vigilant. However, when this gyrfalcon got to the mergansers I could tell she meant business. She startled the whole flock, which took off and headed down the bay. I remember being surprised that they hadn't decided to dive, but perhaps she had just caught them off guard. She proceeded to make pass after pass at the flock as it shot down the bay, staying over the water. She would pick a duck out and stoop on it; pressuring the duck back into the water in a fit of total panic. She did this multiple times, and every duck bailed so hard into the water at such high speed that they looked like rocks skipping across the water. The spray of each impact shot



Wild gyrkin
shortly before
taking off to
chase geese

up at least 8-10 feet. I struggled to keep the action in my binoculars and eventually lost the falcon as the bay came to an end near the hills. She had effectively cleared the entire bay of all the waterfowl, and a couple miles down the road we found her yet again sitting on a rock overlooking the water as if nothing had happened. What an absolute thrill to see these events in the wild!

We hope to continue to return to Alaska for more adventures, be it trapping, hawking or wildlife watching. We would like to thank the *Alaska Department of Fish and Game* for their help with information on local wildlife, and the smooth process with the check-out procedures. We would also like to thank the multiple Alaska falconers who have helped us along the way: we could not have done it without them.



SIMONE
LUPSON-COOK

Simone Lupson-Cook is a falconer and biologist living in the Pacific Northwest. She has been flying hawks for 20 years. Her favourite flights are on snowshoe hares in the mountains with her 20-year-old male red-tail. Simone also enjoys travelling to remote and wild places around the world to observe and enjoy wildlife.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



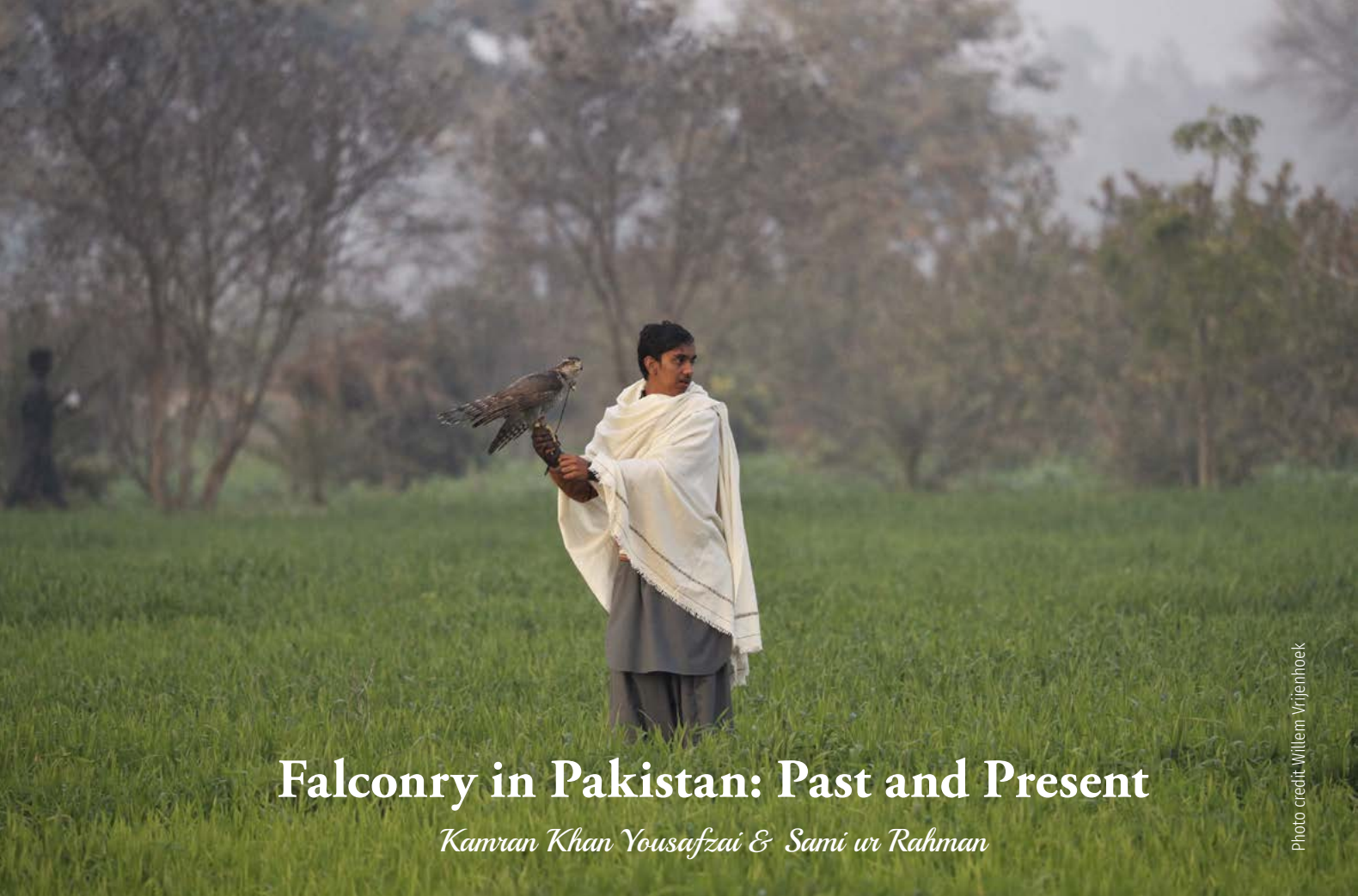
Editor's Note

by Dan Cecchini, Jr. VP of North America, IAF

Trapping of wild hawks has been legal and widely used in North America since American falconry began and continues robustly today. It was included in the USA falconry regulation in the major re-write which became law in 2008 specifically because American falconers felt that it was fundamental to the practice of falconry, which of course has been formally recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010.

The trapping techniques used to acquire passage hawks for falconry are used regularly to trap wild raptors for health surveys, as well as for banding (ringing) thousands of raptors each year in North America to track their populations and movements. The techniques used in this article for the trapping of passage gyrs are currently being used by raptor researchers in Alaska.

It is important that falconers, and those interested in the sport in their locations, check local laws and regulations regarding falconry before attempting to trap wild hawks for training, as they vary widely, including outright prohibition in some locations.



Falconry in Pakistan: Past and Present

Kamran Khan Yousafzai & Sami ur Rahman

South Asia and the adjoining regions of Persia and Afghanistan enjoy a rich history with regard to the sport of falconry. Here, as elsewhere, the representation of hawks and eagles goes back to prehistoric times. Such representations can be found in the mysterious figurines of Mehrgarh (6500 BC – 2500 BC) – in modern-day Balochistan Province, Pakistan – and on the official coins and seals of the Indus Valley civilisation (3300 BC – 1300 BC). We also find numerous references, mainly mythological, in ancient holy scriptures like the *Laws of Manu* and the *Ramayana*.

The first-known specific reference to falconry appears in the *Panchatantra* (also known as the *Fables of Bidpai*), an ancient classic written circa 400 BC that has been translated into over 40 languages. One particular fable that mentions falconry revolves around a falconer from Balkh – an Afghan city along the Silk Road. The falconer is guilty of a moral misdemeanour and is punished by his own hawk attacking his eyeballs and rendering him blind. This fable establishes that falconry existed at that time.

The region comprising Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran can also be termed as the land of *Baznamas* (i.e. treatises on falconry). We have the 12th century Persian *Baznama yi Nasavi* that still exists. We also have the

17th century *Baznama yi Khushal* and the *Baznama yi Afzal Khan Khattak*, a work by the grandson of Khushal. The *Baznama yi Shaukati* is a technical manual in Urdu and translated into English, whilst the *Baznama yi Nāsiri* was translated by the celebrated D.C. Phillott. There are also works like the *Verses of Shyena Vinod* (1026 AD) that have recently been translated by two ornithologists, Dr. Satish Pande and Dr. Suruchi Pande under the title of *Falconry in the Land of the Blackbuck*.

The Early Mughal Era (1526-1556):

The Mughal rulers (1526 – 1857) were fond of different forms of hunting and showed great interest in falconry. King Babur founded the Mughal Dynasty in 1526 and was an accomplished poet, a prolific writer, a falconer and a keen observer of flora and fauna. His autobiography, *Baburnama*, is well respected by historians. The Mughal rulers were the successors of the Timurid ruler, Sultan Ahmed Mirza (reigned 1469 – 1494) who ruled Samarkand and Bukhara, and also successors of the Mongol sovereigns. It was noted of Sultan Mirza that “when he became very corpulent, he took to bringing down pheasants and quails with the goshawks.” Sultan Mirza’s uncle, Derwish Terkhan, was also “extremely skilful in falconry, and excelled in flying his

hawks,” according to Babur. Muhammad Beg was in the service of Sultan Hussain Mirza, ruler of Herat between 1469 and 1506, and he loved his hawks ardently. About his own passion for hunting and hawking, Babur writes: “While I remained in these winter quarters [Armian and Nushab in Uzbekistan] I rode a-hunting every two or three days. . . . we hawked in the smaller jungle for the jungle-fowl.”

Later in 1504, when Babur conquered Kabul, the capital of modern-day Afghanistan, he maintained his passion for fieldsports with the same zeal. After Babur's death in 1530, his eldest son, Humayun, ascended the throne. His political career was mired in crises, however. A decade after commencing his rule, in 1540, he was forced to live in exile in the neighbouring Safavid Empire. While in exile, Humayun was often invited by the Persian monarch to accompany him on his hunting trips that occurred around Persepolis. “His Majesty then returned to Kabul, but frequently went to amuse himself in hawking and fishing on the river Baran”, writes the king's ewer-bearer, Jouhar, in *Private Memoirs of King Humayun*.

The Akbar Era (1556-1605):

When Humayun died prematurely in 1556, his eldest son, Akbar, took the reins of the Mughal Empire and ruled it for almost five decades. The emperor had a passion for falconry and Abul Fazl, court historian and writer of *Ayeyen Akbari* (Constitution of Akbar), observed: “His Majesty. . . . trains the **baz** [goshawk], [black] **shahin**, **shunqar** [gyrfalcon], and **burkat** [golden eagle], and makes them perform wonderful deeds, His Majesty prefers the **basha** [sparrowhawk] to which class of hawks he gives various names.” Abul Fazl adds: “In the middle of spring the birds are inspected; after this they are allowed to moult, and are sent into the country. As soon as the time of moulting is over, they are again inspected.”

Interestingly, the hawk market during Akbar's reign was more regulated than it is today. That is to say, there was neither a black market nor any kind of smuggling or illegal activity. The state policy was crystal clear on the issue and everything was fine-tuned to the minutest detail: “From eagerness to purchase, and from inexperience, people pay high sums for falcons. His Majesty allows dealers every reasonable profit; but from motives of equity, he has limited the prices. The dealers are to get their gain, but buyers ought not to be cheated.”

The usual number of hawks kept in the royal mews during Akbar's times is chronicled thus: “The minimum

number of **baz** and **shahin** falcons kept at the Court is forty; of tiercels, thirty; of sparrowhawks one hundred; of peregrines, sakers twenty; of **lagars**, and **shikaras** ten.” Elsewhere he mentions the method of trapping sakers that is not so different from the unfortunate practice prevalent today in the region, which uses a *lagar* (lugger) as bait and which is strongly discouraged by organisations like *Project Lugger*.

Jehangir the naturalist (r. 1605-1627):

Akbar's golden era ended with his death in 1605 and his eldest son, Jahangir, ascended the throne. He not only inherited his father's vast empire, but also his valour, inquisitiveness, love for art and passion for fieldsports. Dr Salim Ali, the renowned Indian ornithologist, pays a glowing tribute to him in these words: “If Akbar was the greatest monarch of the Moghul dynasty, it cannot be denied that Jahangir was far and away its greatest naturalist.” Jahangir, like his father, maintained an extensive aviary and menagerie, but while Akbar was only interested in the commonly found birds and animals, the son was passionate about all that was out of the ordinary. Jahangir not only closely monitored the living habits of the birds and animals, but also dissected many of them to know about their anatomy and the kind of food they consumed; he performed tests and experiments, made measurements and asked the royal artists to render them on paper.



Painting by Wajih Raja



Insofar as falconry goes, the emperor was an ardent practitioner. His *Memoirs* are replete with hawking expeditions and numerous accounts of hawks and falcons. Here are a few examples: “On Thursday the fourteenth [November 25, 1619] we stopped beside the tank in the village of Sandhara. . . . The hunting birds that had been left in Agra to moult were brought on this day and shown to me by Khwaja Abdul-Latif, the head falcon keeper. The ones that were worthy of my personal establishment were chosen, and the rest were given away to the amirs and other servants.” And, again: “On Sunday the twenty-sixth [March 6, 1619] I mounted to go partridge hawking. At the end of the day I honoured Sultan-Husayn by accepting his invitation to his house. His Majesty [the late King Akbar] had also visited him here. He presented horses, daggers, hawks and falcons. I gave him back the horses and daggers, but I ordered the hawks and falcons tied loosely so that I could see those that flew well.” Jahangir was also a keen observer of wild birds and animals. He wrote: “Along the way I continually enjoyed hunting. One day while hunting I [saw] a hawk catch a white quail, something I hadn’t seen before. By chance, the hawk that caught it was also white.”

The proper Persian word for the gyrfalcon is *shunqar* and for albino is *taighun*. Since albino hawks are prized for their rarity, it is very much possible that every time Jahangir uses the term in his *Memoirs*, he means an albino. He notes that “Albino animals I have seen are the falcon, the sparrowhawk, the hawk that is called **bighu** in

Persian, the sparrow, the crow, the partridge, the quail and the peacock. There is usually an albino hawk in the aviary.”

This is further corroborated by a note that appears just before the paragraph in which he mentions the passage hawk. He says: “Recently Khwaja Hashim Dahbedi had sent five albino hawks from Transoxiana [the old name of Central Asia] as a gift with one of his relatives. One had died along the way, but the other four arrived safely in Ujjain.” Falconry in Central Asia had strong roots during medieval times. Lying on the crucial migration routes of the Central Asian Flyway, there was no dearth of the pertinent hawk species nor their corresponding albinos. The poet-falconer Khushal Khattak (1613-1689) wrote in his *Baznama*:

*In China and Turkey hawks are mostly found
In Turkestan and Shirwan they also abound
That’s one reason why albinos in Turkestan thrive
Caught in great numbers when from their habitats
they arrive*

Hawks and falcons were the mainstay of the long list of royal gifts exchanged between kings or paid as a tribute by the nobility to show their allegiance. Before Jahangir, his father, King Akbar, and the Persian monarch, Shah Tahmasp, also had such an exchange of presents in a bid to strengthen ties. Writing about a rare gyrfalcon that Shah Abbas had sent, Jahangir says: “On October 31, 1619, we marched. The ruler of Iran had

recently sent a falcon of good colour with Piri Beg the chief falconer. He had given another to Khan Alam, who had sent his falcon with the royal falcon destined for the court. Khan Alam's died along the way, and the royal falcon was clawed by a cat through the falconer's negligence. Although it was delivered alive, it didn't live more than a week. What can I write of the beauty of this bird's colour? It had black markings, and every feather on its wings, back and sides was extremely beautiful."

Here is another hawking story: "On the third [January 12, 1617], we decamped and once again, as we had before, we got into boats and went two and an eighth *kos* [roughly sixteen miles] to the camp site in the village of Kawalhas. While I was hunting along the way, a quail flew into a bush. After a search had been made I ordered one of the scouts to surround the bush and get hold of the quail, and I went on. Just then another quail took off. No sooner had I sent a hawk after that one than the scout brought me the first one. I ordered the hawk fed on the latter quail, and I ordered the second one, which we had caught, kept because it was young. By the time this order arrived, the huntsmen had already let the hawk feed on the quail. After a time the scout said, 'If we don't kill the quail, it will die.' I commanded it killed if that was the case. When the blade was placed on its throat, it squirmed out from under the blade and flew away. After that I moved from the boat to horseback, when suddenly a sparrow was blown by the wind and impaled itself on an arrow shaft one of the scouts ahead of me was holding. It died instantly. I marvelled at the twist of fate. Back there, it protected a quail whose time had not come, and within an instant, saved it from danger, while here it made a swallow whose time had come the prisoner of an arrow of destiny in the hand of destruction. If the blade of the world moves, it will not cut a vein until God so wills."

The Shah Jahan Era (1627-1658):

A year after Jahangir's death in 1627, his son, Shah Jahan, ascended the Mughal throne and ruled for about three decades. Unlike his father, Shah Jahan did not entertain much passion for the animal kingdom, but he was a born falconer. Whilst the new king did not maintain a diary in Jahangir's *Memoirs*, he would say on many occasions that he sent albino hawks to Baba Khurram i.e. Shah Jahan. The following account in *Jahangirnama* attests to the fact that Shah Jahan entertained a keen interest in falconry: "Common cranes had been hunted with hawks previously, but I hadn't seen hawks hunt sarus





cranes. Since my son Shah Jahan greatly loves hawking and his hawks were well trained, at his request I mounted early in the morning and got a sarus myself. Another was brought down by the hawk my son held."

There is a curious painting by the 17th century Dutch artist, Willem Schellinks (1627-1678), in the *Victoria and Albert Museum*, London, which was previously entitled *The Hawking Party*. The work was the subject of much controversy for a long period of time respecting the identifications of the human figures. Recent research claims the painting depicts King Shah Jahan's four sons, Shah Shuja, Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb and Murad Bukhsh. It is now titled as the *Parade of the Sons of Shah Jahan on Composite Horses and Elephants*. Schellinks executed three additional paintings of Shah Jahan, along with sketches by another Dutch master, Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669) who

sketched Shah Jahan with his favourite son, Dara Shikoh, who is carrying a hawk.

The decline of the Mughal Empire and falconry (1707-1857):

Shah Jahan's era came to an end when his son, Aurangzeb, usurped power in 1658 through wars with his brothers and court intrigue. When Shah Jahan became confined in the Agra Fort, he was allowed to entertain his heart with his hawks, according to Francois Bernier, the French court physician of Aurangzeb. The Mughal Empire started on a declining trajectory. With the introduction of gunpowder in the 17th and 18th centuries, falconry, as elsewhere, saw a decline in South Asia. During the British colonial period, which started formally in 1857 AD, the sport somehow witnessed a revival, but the glory and splendour that was bestowed upon it by the Mughals was never to be seen again.

The Rajput rajahs of Rajasthan were perhaps the last carriers of this ancient torch, practising falconry with the same princely zeal and fervour until 1940s. After that, it's only a story of governmental bans, restrictions and constraints, with the falconry community in the region merely struggling for survival. In India, falconry has been banned on the pretext of religious observances ever since the nation's independence in 1947. In Afghanistan, which has been continuously in a state of war since 1979, it has literally vanished into thin air, and works like *Falconry in the Land of the Sun* and *Musings*



of an Afghan Falconer by S.M. Osman and Kühnert's *Falknerei in Afghanistan* are all we have now of the once thriving field sport. As for Pakistan, the tradition has somehow managed to survive, but the state's lopsided rules and regulations since the mid-eighties make it quite difficult to practise it.

The revival of falconry in Pakistan:

Pakistan is now home to quite a sizeable number of active falconers. These sportsmen are the torch-bearers of the old heritage. Traditionally, the goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) has been a favourite species, so much so that its local nickname is the *Shahbaz* i.e. the king of hawks. Merlins and shikras, along with other small hawks, are considered ideal for young trainees to learn the art of falconry. The shortwings are favoured by locals due to the topography of much of the land, whilst the saker (*Falco cherrug*) is best suited to deserts. Pakistan's hunting grounds generally require a raptor that is not only shortwinged but also readily available and which, furthermore, is keen to hunt the type of quarry that is at our disposal.

As far as the migration routes of Pakistan are concerned, the majority of the birds cross into the

country over the Karakorum, Hindu Kush and Sulaiman ranges through the Indus Flyway – an offshoot of the famous Central Asian Flyway (CAF), originating from Siberia in Russia. An estimated 700,000 to 1.2 million birds migrate to Pakistan each year. Among the birds of prey, there are both shortwinged and longwinged hawks, notably the black shaheen, the peregrine, the saker, the red-naped shaheen, the *turumti* or red-necked merlin, the northern goshawk, the sparrowhawk, the golden eagle, the steppe eagle etc. Diverse species of waterfowl such as teal, mallard, pintail, gadwall, cranes and prized species like the houbara bustard also take the same route. There are 45 sanctuaries spread over an area of around 900,000 hectares in the Sindh province alone. The migratory birds usually arrive around mid-October and fly back to their nesting regions around mid-March, depending on the weather and temperatures each year.

The trapping sites, likewise, fall along the Indus Flyway. Kabul and Kashmir used to be major sources of hawks before Partition. Nowadays, the Valley of Chitral in the northern area of Pakistan serves as a key site for trapping hawks; goshawks in particular. Other such sites include the Peshawar Valley, Tirah Valley,





Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Swabi, Attock, Jhang and Dera Ismail Khan etc. There are different elaborate and ingenious methods to trap goshawks, devised and perfected by the local falconers through the centuries.

In the year 2006, a group of local falconry enthusiasts got together with the intent of forming a falconry

association. The *Pakistan Falconry Association* (PFA) had a desire to raise the voice of Pakistani sportsmen at home and abroad in order to protect their centuries-old heritage, and it was registered in 2008. The PFA aimed at devising state policies regarding the practice in order to legalise it through government channels. It sought a policy shift in the prevalent lopsided and impractical government legislation and advocated for the utilisation of local falconry knowledge as a tool to both mitigate underhand practices and to increase national revenue through legitimate sources. Broadly speaking, the organisation strives to create awareness about the protection, conservation and rehabilitation of raptors and their corresponding prey, so as to maintain a balance between the two. Overall, it respects nature and seeks to live in harmony with it.

Soon after forming the PFA, falconers started to associate with the international players in the field with common goals and shared interests. They included IAF, UNESCO, and the *Falconry Heritage Trust* (FHT) etc. The PFA requested membership of the IAF as early as 2008 and achieved full membership at the IAF AGM in Qatar in February, 2014.

The *Pakistan Falconry Association's* second leap forward was its contribution to Pakistan's inscription on UNESCO's representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Together with the Ministries of Heritage (*Lok Virsa*), Information & Broadcasting and the *Pakistan National Commission* of UNESCO, falconers played a pivotal role in the inscription. With



the additional support of IAF and the Abu Dhabi government, Pakistan's case was approved at UNESCO's *Workshop on the Extension of Multi-national Nomination of Falconry as Human Living Heritage* in March, 2014. Thanks to the joint efforts of all concerned, the country is now obliged to safeguard falconry as a cultural heritage.

During the past decade, delegations of Pakistani falconers have also actively participated in the *International Festival of Falconry* held in the United Arab Emirates in 2011, 2014 and 2017. Falconer delegations at the festivals are comprised of local falconers, hood makers, craftsmen, writers and researchers. Each group is assigned a stall where they can exhibit falconry furniture such as hoods, gloves, jesses, bells and *jangoli* (halsbands) etc. During the third festival in 2014, PFA premiered a documentary, *Palm Nest*, portraying local methods of trapping, manning, training and treating certain ailments of goshawks. The festival participants showed keen interest in the documentary, of which numerous copies were distributed free of charge. The Pakistani delegation was already on hand to explain

certain aspects of local manning techniques, like *gaddi* making, to foreign sportsmen, to whom it was something new and novel. The Pakistani stalls are also a popular attraction due to their varied programmes that include arts and crafts and traditional music.

A number of monographs, research papers, newspaper articles and two hardback volumes entitled *The Book of Falconry* by Khushal Khan Khattak and *The Art of Falconry in the Mughal Empire* have been published. The former is a falconry treatise written in Pashto in the 17th century. Written in poetic form, it contains forty-seven poems/chapters and was launched on the occasion of the 2014 *International Festival of Falconry*. The latter volume deals with the history of falconry through works of art produced on the Sub-continent during the Mughal era and was published in connection with the 2017 event in Abu Dhabi. The books were sponsored by the FHT and IAF and received critical acclaim by experts in the field.

As elsewhere, the biggest hurdle for Pakistan's falconers is the legal status of falconry in the country. There is a virtual ban on the sport that was enforced



IAF AGM 2017 in Kyrgyzstan



Pakistan National Strategic Workshop January 2020

under the infamous martial law of General Zia in the mid-eighties. It has been a constant struggle to persuade provincial wildlife departments, politicians and concerned authorities to lift this ban through legislative measures and to allow the falconry community to practise the art in a conducive environment. A consultative session on the challenges faced by Pakistan's provincial wildlife departments with respect to the conservation of fast diminishing populations of different raptor species, and to the legalisation of hawking, was organised by the *Wildlife Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, in collaboration with Pakistani falconers and IAF on February 28, 2019 in Peshawar. The participants of the session urged the need for accelerating efforts to conserve raptors throughout

the province. In November, 2019, a meeting was held between delegations of IAF and members of the Gilgit Conservation Department. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for the *Forest, Wildlife and Environment Department, Gilgit-Baltistan*. During their week-long visit, national falconers and IAF held a number of fruitful sessions with the wildlife officials and educated them on the need for a workable model, whereby not only the wild populations of raptors are protected but foreign tourism and investments are also guaranteed.

It is pertinent to mention here that Gilgit-Baltistan is the only area of Pakistan with an open, progressive and forwarding-looking approach as far as falconry is concerned. There is not only more awareness about the welfare and safety of wildlife, but also realisation of the need to protect populations of different local and visiting species of birds and animals. Trophy hunting of Himalayan ibex, blue sheep (*bharal*) and markhor is well-regulated for local and foreign sportsmen, and falconers are hoping to adopt a similar model for hunting with hawks.

In January 2020, Pakistani falconers organised a national strategic workshop on *Conservation of Raptors in Pakistan and Safeguarding Falconry: A Heritage Sport* in Islamabad. It was attended by representatives of the *International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF)*, *Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)*, *IUCN*, *Ministry of Climate Change*, *Raptor Centre for Conservation and Rehabilitation Pakistan*



(RCCRP), *Ministry of Heritage, National History and Literary Heritage Division, Pakistan Forest Institute, Zoological Survey of Pakistan*, various provincial wildlife departments, the *Civil Aviation Authority* and other concerned authorities and experts in the field.

The issues discussed at the workshop included biodiversity conservation, the lack of effective conservation measures and the legal framework needed to manage falconry, falconry knowledge as a conservation tool and electrocution of birds of prey, among other things. The workshop recommended the involvement of universities, ornithologists and falconers in raptor status studies, population counts, field monitoring procedures and the establishment of raptor rehabilitation centres, etc. Overall, the workshop was quite a fruitful interaction between academia, government authorities and the local falconry community.

Pakistan's falconers also have to their credit a major rehabilitation task: in fact, the biggest one so far on a national level. This all started with the confiscation by the *Sindh Wildlife Department* of some eighty falcons that were being illegally exported from *Karachi International Airport* in 2021. The cache included prized species like the peregrine, saker and gyr, as well as some luggers. Falconers quickly volunteered their



Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic, Russian
and Urdu



services to the authorities to rehabilitate the birds to flying condition. The timing of this incident was quite unfortunate, as Covid-19 had just plagued the whole world and communication and transportation was at its lowest ebb. The *Pakistan Falconry Association* was able to persuade international experts in the field – Bob Dalton of *Project Lugger* and Wayne Davis of *The Ancient Order of the Houbara* – to lend a helping hand. After months of care – feeding, imping and chipping – and incurring huge financial costs, the surviving hawks were rehabilitated to their natural state and released back into the wild.

It is pertinent to mention that Pakistani falconers were honoured to have provided assistance in rescuing two steppe eagles that were taken in custody by the law enforcement agencies from a bird market in the port city of Karachi. These eagles required medical

care and proper rehabilitation facilities to bring them back to flying condition. Such care was given by local and foreign experts, who also chipped the eagles with GPS. They are now soaring in their natural habitats, thousands of miles from where they were rescued.

To make things easier in the future, Pakistani falconers are planning to establish a raptor rehabilitation centre in collaboration with the international experts. The joint venture has already identified a scenic site on the bank of the River Hunza in Gilgit-Baltistan, and is in the initial stage at present. On the sidelines, a state-of-the-art display centre has also been planned that will be run under the auspices of the Gilgit-Baltistan government. This latter facility will not only provide display flights for visitors but also accommodation and customised falconry experiences to both foreign and native falconers.



KAMRAN
KHAN
YOUSAFZAI

Kamran Khan Yousafzai is President of the *Pakistan Falconry Association* & Director of the *Raptor Centre Pakistan*. He is a traditional falconer who has flown hawks since childhood, and has been devoted to bird of prey conservation activities for the last 15 years. His recent activities include the addition of Pakistan to the nations which have inscribed falconry as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage and working with communities and the Pakistan government authorities on legislative measures to safeguard the living culture of falconry in the region.




SAMI
UR RAHMAN

Sami ur Rahman is a freelance columnist and translator, associated with the *Pakistan Falconry Association* and *Raptor Centre* as a senior researcher since 2014. He translated the 17th century treatise on falconry by Khushal Khan Khattak from Pashto into English and has also authored *The Art of Falconry in the Mughal Empire*. Both titles, sponsored by IAF and the FHT with support from the *Pakistan Falconry Association*, have been very well received by falconers and experts on the sport's cultural heritage.



Photo credit: Willem Vrijenhoek



In Search of the Rare Orange-Breasted Falcon *Falco deiroleucus* (Temminck, 1825) in the Atlantic Forest, Brazil

Gustavo Diniz Mendes de Carvalho, Eduardo Pio M. De Carvalho Filho and Juliana Peres.

The orange-breasted falcon, *Falco deiroleucus* (Temminck, 1825)

The orange-breasted falcon is a stocky, medium-sized species, with the female being larger than the male. When fully grown, the upper breast is orangish; the lower breast, flanks and underwing coverts are black with yellowish brown markings (Sick, 1997). Upper parts are black, with a black “helmet” and white throat. The toes are proportionately long for a falcon and are bright yellow (Del Hoyo et al., 1994). The immature bird has a pale cinnamon, dark-barred breast and belly (Sick 1997).

This species is associated with conserved forest environments. It is found in the Atlantic Forest on rocky outcrops surrounded by conserved forest. They are very territorial, living for years in the same area. To capture its prey, it darts at birds flying over the forest canopy or hunts from open perches high above the canopy, chasing, for example, species of the *Columbidae*, *Psittacidae* and *Corvidae* families and even faster birds such as the *Hirundinidae* and *Apodidae* families. They hunt bats at dusk or search epiphytes [plants growing on other plants] for more lethargic prey species. This falcon catches insects and sandpipers on river beaches and in the breeding season, during courtship, the male offers prey to the female. The pair nests in trees or on cliffs.

The orange-breasted falcon is distributed through Central and South America in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Suriname, Venezuela and Mexico.

In Brazil, the species has become rare in the south and southeast due to habitat fragmentation, deforestation, quarrying/mining and persecution. They are found, with isolated records, in the states of Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo and Rio de Janeiro. In northern Brazil, particularly in the Amazon, the species is more abundant and can be observed on top of dry branches, and on the banks of rivers and streams (Sigrist, 2009).

In the search of the orange-breasted falcon in the Atlantic Forest

Our research into the enigmatic orange-breasted falcon in the Atlantic Forest began in 2010 in the state of Espírito Santo, southeastern Brazil: efforts were directed towards this biome due to its fragility. Our first encounter took place in the city of Fundão in October



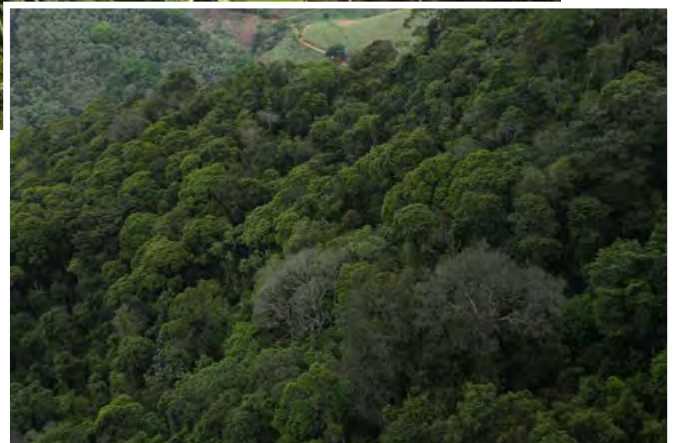
<http://globalfalcons.org/publicacoes-conservacao/>



2010, in the area of the Municipal Park of Goiapaba-çu, where a rocky peak of 850m can be found. The region is surrounded by small rural properties and small fragments of Atlantic Forest. On that occasion, we saw a pair in flight cutting through the low fog of the valley between the mountains.

From our first record, we started searching for possible breeding sites of the orange-breasted falcon. Monthly expeditions were carried out during 2010 and 2011 in search of possible nests, after the pairs were identified. The expeditions prioritised the areas around the rock and the top of the mountain. At the mountain top, strategic points were chosen, seeking for better observation angles.

The searches around the rock were more exhausting because the area was both steep and densely forested, making it difficult to walk with the equipment. After numerous visits to the site, it was possible to see the OBF pair on 09/11/2011 perched in a tree near a rocky wall and, after a few hours of observations, it was possible to record the birds copulating. From this record, the expeditions were intensified and focused in this region where, in 09/25/2011, it was possible to find the place where the *Falco deiroleucus*' nest was located. To access the site, it was necessary to prepare a more elaborate expedition since, in addition to the two-hour hike through dense forest, we had a 400m 90 degree wall to climb. After all the preparations, the expedition took place in October 2011, where we managed to identify the long sought-after OBF nest with three eyasses inside. The entire team felt a lot of



Atlantic Forest

emotion when, after almost a year of searching, we were presented with this beautiful record.

The nest was built on a platform on the rocky outcrop, 400m above the ground. The eyasses were in an incubation chamber built between small stones of different sizes. To continue the research, it was necessary to inspect the nest to gather more information about the reproductive success, parental care, the growth of the chicks and to learn more about the diet of this mysterious falcon.

The young were measured, weighed and banded for three seasons (2011, 2012 and 2013). In 2014, whilst the pair of *Falco deiroleucus* continued to be monitored in this region, they didn't use the same nest we had found. Another nest was found on the same rocky outcrop in November 2015, but in a crack 600m higher, making it impossible for the researchers to gather data. However, even at a distance, possible data for the research was noted with the help of binoculars, like the chicks' feeding routine and monitoring the immature birds after leaving the nest. This nest is still active and the last data collected was in 2020.

Another research area of the *Orange-breasted falcon Conservation Project in the Atlantic Forest*

The *Orange-breasted falcon Conservation Project* discovered another breeding site during these years in the state of Espírito Santo, yielding even more valuable information for the species' conservation. In 2011, after several expeditions to a new location, a second breeding site was located in a state park in the municipality of Afonso Claudio/ES. The nest was on a platform, on the slope of a rocky wall, next to a waterfall (Cachoeira de Matilde). This was an active nest in which a female was incubating three eggs.

Two breeding sites were located in the Domingos Martins region and, whilst the nests were not found due to the difficult access to these places, the environment is characteristic of the species' breeding sites. However, it was still possible to monitor one of the sites as the pair was taking prey to the alleged nest and, two months later, two *Falco deiroleucus* juveniles were seen flying over the studied area, corroborating the hypothesis of the breeding site. It was also possible to record one pair of orange-breasted falcons in the second monitored area and, months later, two immatures were recorded at the site.

In the Cariacica region, close to the Duas Bocas Biological Reserve, falcons were observed and recorded in 2014. In 2016, the project team visited the regions close to the reserve but had no success in recording the species. In March 2020, after another visit to the proximities of the Duas Bocas Biological Reserve, the team recorded a pair flying over an area with a rocky outcrop; one with characteristics suited to serve as a breeding site for the species. Due to distance and access difficulties, the team monitored the pairs' behaviour from a distance.

Two other possible breeding sites were visited by the team, one in the Sooretama Reserve (Linhares/ES) and the other in the João Neiva region, northern Espírito Santo, but the reproductive sites in the location haven't been found yet.

The team visited the Miracema/RJ area, in which an isolated report of the orange-breasted falcon was made. It was possible to identify rock formations which suited the species' breeding requirements but, during the visits, the team was only able to record the vocalisation of *Falco deiroleucus*.

Conservation status of the orange-breasted falcon

In 1982, Dr. Tom Cade, an avid lifelong falconer, field biologist, Cornell professor, and founder of *The Peregrine*

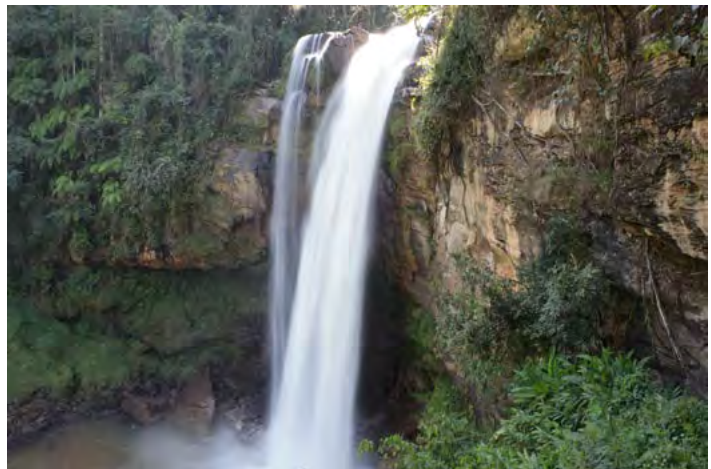


Photo credits: Gustavo Diniz Carvalho



Nest #2. Photo credit: Gustavo Diniz Carvalho



Fund, reported that the orange-breasted falcon is one of the rarest falcons in the world, having very few and specific records in every known distribution area. Although records are widely distributed in Brazil, their reproductive and residence status and preferences are not known, making it difficult to assess any population tendency.

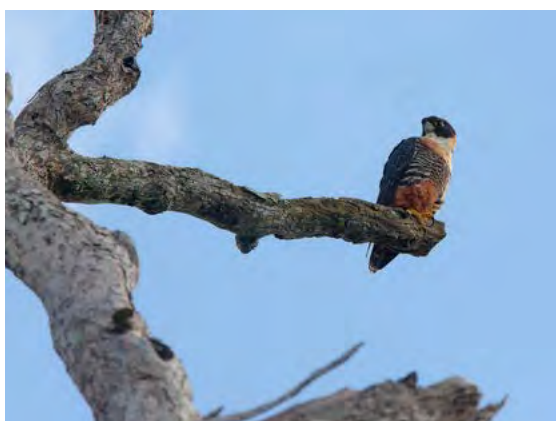
The species is in sharp population decline in all areas of its distribution in Belize, dropping from 83% (1992-1997) to 54% (2003-2009), with the population of offspring dropping 35% as well. The main factors behind this decline are human conflicts, loss of habitat caused by deforestation as well as nest competition and depredation by *Coragyps atratus* (Berry et al., 2010; BirdLife International, 2012 and Ferguson-Lees & Christie, 2001).

According to the IUCN criteria, the conservation status of *Falco deiroleucus* is rated as Near Threatened

(NT). Since it is a species little studied, potential changes in its conservation status, as pointed out by Stotz et al. (1996), should be a high priority for research.

Conservation project actions

The *Orange-breasted falcon Conservation Project* was developed by *Global Falcons* over the past ten years and has obtained important information on the species, making it possible to direct conservation strategies for this rare falcon. We are always looking for new areas of action to better understand the distribution of this species in the Atlantic Forest. The Project expects the expansion of its operation in the Cerrado and in the Amazon Forest, covering all areas of occurrence of the species in Brazil. We have implemented environmental education in the areas where we found breeding sites to inform the local



Adult perched



Juvenile



population about the importance of forest conservation to the rare orange-breasted falcon. Reducing deforestation is one of the main conservation actions that must be monitored and supported through public policies so that the environmental organisations can act.

The Project aims to breed the species in captivity, as we believe that the young hatched will play an important role in supplementing existing populations and increasing the genetic viability of isolated populations.

We still have a lot of work ahead of us but, little by little, we will be achieving our goals and helping the conservation of this scarce falcon.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the owners of Fazenda Goiapabaçu, Mr Ângelo Roberto Sarnaglia and Mrs Gertrudes Zanoni Sarnaglia, where research into *Falco deiroleucus* has been carried out since 2010 in the city of Fundão; to biologist Jessica Tulio for translating this article, and to biologist Giancarlo Zorzim for making his *Falco deiroleucus* plate available. We would also like to thank everyone who was present in the expeditions in search of the orange-breasted falcon or who has contributed in any way to this project.

References

- Berry, R. B. Benkman, C.W., Muela, A., Seminario, Y. & Curti, M. (2010). 'Isolation and Decline Of A Population Of The Orange-Breasted Falcon' in *The Condor* 112(3):479–489.
- BirdLife International. (2011). Species factsheet: *Falco deiroleucus*. <<http://www.birdlife.org>> (Accessed on: 08/04/2021).
- Cade, T.J. (1982). *Falcons of the World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Del Hoyo, J., Elliot, A. & Sargatal, J. (eds) (1994). *Handbook of the Birds of the World. Vol 2. New World Vultures to Guinea-fowl*. Barcelona: Lynx Ediciones.
- Ferguson-Lees, J., Christie, D.A. (2001). *Raptors of the World*. Princeton, N.J.,
- ICMBio (2008). *Plano de ação nacional para a conservação de aves de rapina*. Brasília: Coordenação Geral de Espécies Ameaçadas.
- Sick, H. (1997). *Ornitologia Brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira.
- Sigrist, T. (2006). *Aves do Brasil - uma visão artística*. São Paulo: Avis Brasilis.
- Sigrist, T. (2009). *Guia De Campo Avis Brasilis – Avifauna Brasileira*. São Paulo: Ricardo Sigrist.
- Simon, J.F., Dias, A.C., Magnago, G. & Quental, J.G.S. (2008) Primeiro Registro Do Falcão-De-Peito-Vermelho *Falco Deiroleucus* Temminck, 1825 (Falconidae) Para o Estado Do Espírito Santo.
- Stotz, D.F., Fitzpatrick, J.W., Parker III, T.A., & Moskovits, D.K. (1996). *Neotropical Birds: Ecology and Conservation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thiollay, J.M. (1989). 'Area requirements for the conservation of rain forest raptors and game-birds in French Guiana' in *Conservation Biology* 3: 128-137.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



GUSTAVO DINIZ
MENDES DE CARVALHO

Gustavo Diniz Mendes de Carvalho – Biologist, researcher and nature photographer. Founder of SOS Falconiformes (1997-2015) and partner in the companies Global Falcons (2017) and Linha Ambiental (2009). He has been involved in projects for the rehabilitation of falconiformes and fauna management and research projects that support bird conservation in Brazil. He participated in the Harpia Pau Brasil Project for harpy eagle rehabilitation and conservation, and has coordinated conservation research into *Falco deiroleucus* in Espírito Santo since 2011, where he monitors five nests of this species. Global Falcons Falcoaria e Conservação Ltda. www.globalfalcons.org – @gustavodinizcarvalho



The Evolution of Falconry in Australia

Gina Pike

I am a falconer and a mum, now working in animal services from my farm in Western Australia. I started out my working life as a veterinary nurse and wildlife carer and, though I have worked with a large range of animal species, birds have always had a special place in my life. Realising how specialised the care of raptors was, I decided I needed to learn much more. It quickly became obvious that no one cares for raptors better than falconers, and they have an endless knowledge of ecology, conservation and of specific species, as well as traditional falconry techniques. Learning about falconry and using those methods to assist the raptors in my care has opened up a multi-faceted world for me.

This road led me to evolve into becoming a falconer and stepping away from veterinary nursing, though the nursing had given me the captivating experience that awakened the falconer within. I had had the odd experience with raptors flashing in and out of my life. When I was very young, I remember my brother having sick or injured wedge-tailed eagles (*Aquila audax*) in his parrot aviaries awaiting pick up by the authorities. Often poisoned, he would find them by the dam, unable to fly or even stand up. But it wasn't until I took an underweight collared sparrowhawk (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*) home from the vet hospital for fattening up, when I was about 20 years old, that my heart and my hand were stolen.

I kept the bird in a cage and was feeding it up, though giving it way too much for its size. It was so calm I thought it would be fine to just reach in and take out the left-over food. Quick as a flash that

spar was attached to the back of my hand and I was pinned. Every tiny movement I attempted made the spar's grip tighten. To my uneducated mind, the bird appeared fearless. I looked into its eyes and it looked straight through mine and into my soul. After a few days when its weight had been restored, the bird was released, luckily still in perfect feather condition, not that I understood how important that was at the time!

What is falconry in Australia like? Since I have no experience elsewhere to compare it to, I'll do my best to describe a little for you though my experience here in Western Australia may vary greatly from that of our friends on the east coast, some 3,500km to 4,000km away. Within the country, each state has its own variety of both raptors and prey species and its own set of legislation. There aren't many of us, but there are falconers in most Australian states now. Generations of people interested in practicing falconry were met with frustration in Australia as the sport was not legislated for by the states, but we are now seeing government departments moving with the times and including free-flight (falconry-based training) techniques within official guidelines for bird of prey rehabilitation. Thus, we are seeing falconry methods being brought out of the shadows and discussed much more openly.

I have to be very self-sufficient when it comes to making equipment and finding food sources. There aren't gamekeepers here and it's hard to find turkey pullets in bulk numbers at an affordable price. A couple of years ago, our supplier of day-old chicks stopped selling those too, which effectively removed the only

RFAWA members at "The Farm" in York Western Australia. Photo credit - Chris Brook





Gina Pike beginning fitness training with "Rusty" a brown falcon (*Falco berigora*) for rehabilitation. Photo credit – David Palmer

cheap commercially available food source. Living on a farm in the wheat-belt for the past six years has made it possible to breed rats, mice, quail, chickens, guinea pigs and pigeons for myself at different times, depending on what birds are in care with me. I have obtained birds and rabbits from hunters and dog trial clubs, and roosters from people with excess birds, though you soon learn not to take too many of those. Roadkill kangaroo is a good, fast way to fill a freezer when you have a wedge-tailed eagle to feed. This experience led me to decide to start breeding quail and pigeons to supply to others using permaculture farming methods.

There are no falconry equipment supply shops in Australia, though I am lucky to have a very good hood maker close by – Nicholas Stanton. For everything else, the choices are to make your own or order in from another country. Ordering from abroad means doubling the price listed to take in the exchange rate plus \$30 to \$100 for postage and possibly import tax too. I make a lot of my own equipment and furniture and build my own aviaries. I have also started making braids for others on request. That's just the way it is and we always find a way to make things work. An adage I live by is "if you want something bad enough, you'll do whatever it takes to get it." This year has brought a range of new challenges and, while life changes around me, I'll be sure to continue to make plenty of space in my life for falconry.

Living on a farm, it takes me an hour to get anywhere, whether for food shopping or visiting family and such, but it's only five minutes to open fields, big sky, bushland and ponds. As the name suggests, the wheat-belt is an area for agriculture and farming. Over the winter, the paddocks are green with fresh new grasses that spring up through the red dirt with the rainfall around April/May. Dams that sit dry and cracked for months over summer hold water until about December. The large paddocks usually containing sheep, cattle or horses afford us the open spaces we need to give our

hawks the best opportunity for success. Corridors of natural bush line the fences and pockets and contain eucalyptus, banksia, xanthorrhoea, hakea, paperbark, myrtles, she-oak and wattle trees, all of which harbour wildlife. The food and water supplied for the livestock draws wildlife out of the trees, affording them greater opportunity to breed successfully as water would be scarce without human modification of the land. The land has occasional small hills and the odd rocky outcrop but is mostly fairly flat. Weather over the autumn and winter days ranges from sunny and 28°C to wet, windy and 11°C. It never snows but nights can get as cold as -6°C and the icy south winter winds come straight from Antarctica.

I practice our art legally and transparently, under a license from the *Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions* working as a part of the *Raptor Fliers Association of Western Australia, (RFAWA Inc)*. I obtain birds requiring rehabilitation from wildlife carers, veterinary hospitals and the public. It is illegal in Australia to take raptors out of the wild and into captivity, but it is legal in Western Australia to fly birds already in captivity and allow them to exhibit their natural behaviours to a level which is consistent with wild survival for that species, when it's appropriate in the circumstances and when licensed to do so. While aviary-based rehab is fine in many situations, there are some very special cases that require falconry techniques and doing anything less would be an injustice to the bird. Falconry has also given me an important understanding of how to distinguish between those birds that do

Brown falcon, "Rusty" (*Falco berigora*) during rehabilitation training. Photo credit – David Palmer





Getting ready to fly, Gina Pike and "Dizzy".
Photo credit – Chris Brook

not have what it takes to survive in the harsh, wild environment, and those that should be given every opportunity to have a chance at returning to free living.

Over the years, I have flown a number of different species: a brown falcon (*Falco berigora*), a few nankeen kestrels (*Falco cenchroides*) and a whistling kite (*Haliastur sphenurus*), but *Dizzy*, a tiercel hobby (a robin, to use more accurate falconry parlance) otherwise commonly known as the 'little falcon' (*Falco longipennis*), was my first falconry rehab bird. An amazing little critter, his fastest speed that I recorded on the GPS was 111kmh

and he climbed higher than 120m a few times. I believe he may have flown faster than that on several previous occasions, but I hadn't had the GPS very long. Little falcons can be described as small peregrines. Their flight style and shape are closely matched, though the little falcon is considerably smaller, with robins weighing in around 190g and falcons closer to 300g. They often gain a height advantage over their target and use stoops, speed and agility to outfly the quarry. These tiny but mighty falcons win the hearts of all who fly them. They are tenacious, brave and loyal little hawks that tame down very quickly and are often described as "just so easy and enjoyable".

I'd like to share two rehabilitation flights with you, the first featuring *Dizzy*, the little falcon rehab, and the second a flight I witnessed by a *submelanogenys* peregrine falcon flown by Michael Calvin. On the day of the flight with *Dizzy*, both my children and I had been sick for weeks with school-based colds. I had let my pigeons out of their aviary early, thinking we wouldn't fly that day. But then, as I walked out to feed

Gina Pike, Quill Chapman-Stone and "Fern" out flying "Dizzy" at the York meet.
Photo credit – Chris Brook



Dizzy, there were two crested pigeons on the lawn and I just couldn't resist. The need to get him in the air won me over. It had been taking me up to 30 minutes to connect to the GPS and some days I couldn't at all because of phone coverage issues, along with the heavy iron content in the rocks out here. Feeling very poorly, I skipped that part of the preparation and just flew with the back-up telemetry. As I slipped the jesses out, I saw the crested pigeons fly across the paddock and up into a high tree.

My pet pigeons were also already in the air as *Dizzy* left my fist and he made straight for them. He climbed and climbed, higher than the phone could film, ringing up after the pigeons into the blue sky. They were easily up at 120m or more, tiny, flickering specks in the sky. When I looked down, a young kestrel was coming across the paddock and around the tree. *Dizzy* put in a tear-drop stoop from high in the sky above, seemingly coming from nowhere, and bound to the unfortunate kestrel about ten metres in front of me. There was a tussle in the air, so I threw my lure out and he left the kestrel, coming my way before the two birds had hit the ground. *Dizzy* took his fill of pigeon meat from my pocket.

This was one of the best flights I witnessed from *Dizzy* as we worked mostly at low levels in tight cover. Every day with that little guy was enjoyable, even with the chaos. Most days, the routine was to put him up out in the paddock and he would follow me to spots where I knew he would get the opportunity to take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities. He had chases at elegant parrots, crested pigeons and stubble quail. He caught and killed pigeons and caught three wild birds, all of them opportunistic and natural, which is what we prefer. My time flying *Dizzy* was also spent with my young kids (aged two and four at the time) and occasionally with my friend Daylen. It was time well spent out in the countryside, having a laugh, enriching our lives, building bonds and creating experiences, all the while contributing to conservation and helping a falcon return to the wild. I learned so much from that little bird, but there's still so much more to learn.

There's another flight I want to share, although I wish I'd savoured it more at the time because it wasn't until later, when I was telling a friend about it, that I then realised just how truly special it had been. Michael Calvin put his female peregrine falcon *Nelly Kelly* up for her daily flight just as the wedge-tailed eagles were beginning to soar. As expected, she ate up the sky, found



a thermal and soon rose up into the blue. Within ten minutes, she was so high and wide that we could no longer see her. We drove a kilometre or so, passing many dams on the way, which held some pacific black ducks and a few teal but the majority of the flocks consisted of maned geese, otherwise known as wood ducks. These are roughly about the size of mallards and are considered something of a pest species here, for which reason it is possible to get a license to shoot them for a few months each year to reduce their fouling up of the precious dam water. With flying the falcons over these waters, we move the ducks on, which reduces the requirement for shooting them. This has less of an environmental impact and is a much more naturally selective way of doing a favour for the farmer, whilst assisting in the rehabilitation of an apex predator which is listed here as being 'specially protected'. Everyone wins, right?

Anyway, as we drove, a flock lifted and *Nelly* came hurtling down but they saw her coming and splashed back in to the safety of the water. When this happened, Michael left the ducks alone and explained that this wasn't solely about killing a duck but also a teaching moment. *Nelly* had to learn from her mistakes

Leo Chapman-Stone (son) with Michael Calvin's barn owl "Hagrid"
Photo credit – David Palmer

Orphaned brown goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) eyasses arrive



Brown goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) first weight check



and allow opportunities to develop and open up before she fully committed to an attack. We quickly moved on, leaving *Nelly* to begin another ascent.

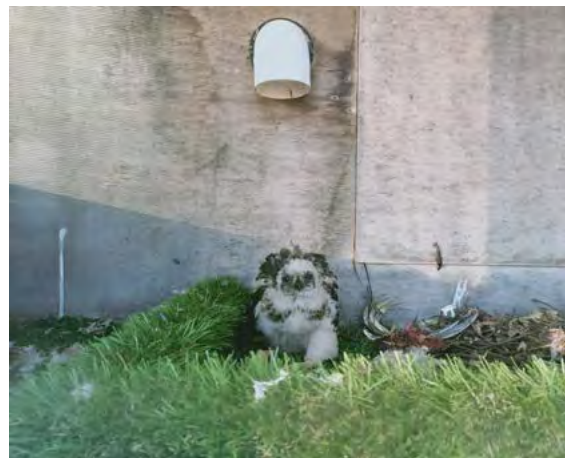
Soon, she was joined by another three peregrines, no doubt all showing off to each other in readiness for the upcoming breeding season. We watched for a while but didn't delay too long in driving across another paddock or two to check out some other dams. Soon enough, the GPS live track was telling us that *Nelly* was now several hundred metres up over a pond a couple of kilometres further on and was ignoring the familiar cues to return overhead. We quickly realised what was happening and raced across two massive paddocks at

70kmh. As we passed by dams to the right and left of us, the ducks went on their way, this time clearly not aware that danger was incoming. They circled out, then back towards us, passing over our heads before committing to reaching the next dam, which was about 400m distant.

The GPS indicated that *Nelly* was on her way, the reports telling us that she was dropping by dozens of metres per second. Like a bolt from the blue, she appeared in a magnificent arc, streaking across the sky at a speed in excess of 250kmh and with an audible roar as she cut through the air. She lined them up and power-bound to a straggler,



Brown goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) eyasses in a holding pen waiting to head to the hack station



Brown goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) shortly after being placed in the hack station



Gina Pike standing next to the Boddington hack station

bringing her prize to ground just before they reached the safety of the dam they were headed for. She had just done what all wild peregrines need to be able to do in order to survive and I was there to see it. Her journey through the rehabilitation process was coming to an end. Wow!

That weekend was shared by a few of us that hold a passion for the conservation of these raptors in our hearts. Falconry is the gift that keeps on giving. Knowledge, friendship, camaraderie, dedication, understanding and patience; the list seems never ending but perhaps the most important thing is that it serves these raptors so well. For me, it feels like I've found my people. Having suffered injuries in the wild, both *Dizzy* and *Nelly Kelly*

were undergoing falconry rehabilitation in accordance with the ethos and spirit of *The Raptor Fliers Association of Western Australia*. This is the only legally incorporated organisation within Australia that has, as its main function, the use of free-flight and falconry techniques in the rehabilitation of native raptors.

Both of these hawks were trained and extensively free-flown over several months in their natural environment in order to give them every opportunity to experience life in the wild under controlled conditions. They built fitness naturally, without physical boundaries, and gained an education about survival that they would normally, in ideal circumstances, have learned from their parents, an experience they had been robbed of through no fault of their own. In time, both hawks eventually passed every test and challenge they were faced with and have since been released back to the wild and are now independent and free living.

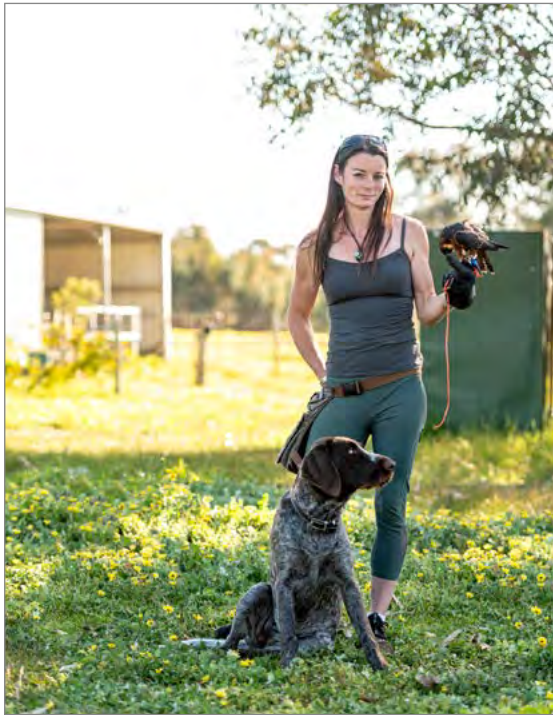
A percentage of the birds we see come in as orphans or failed fledglings. These birds have no education to survive in the wild on their own. There are many lessons a young bird learns from its parents before dispersing away from the natal territory. These lessons include recognising their own species and environment, communication, predator avoidance, alarm calls from other species, handling different weather conditions and everything that comes with flight including landing, using the wind and thermals, soaring and, very importantly, hunting. Using falconry in rehabilitation makes it possible for us to facilitate this learning while keeping the hawks safe and well fed.



Brown goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) at brancher stage on the hack station ledge



Brancher brown goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) on the hack station ledge



Gina Pike with "Fern" a German wirehaired pointer and "Dizzy" a rehab little falcon (*Falco longipennis*). Photo credit – David Palmer

When a dynamic hunter like the peregrine falcon is admitted as a single orphan, it requires free-flight exercise training by a qualified falconer. This is vital to build muscle and flight ability. The hawk is flown in an area where it has the opportunity to exhibit its natural behaviour and hunting strategies to catch something to eat – always with the safety net of the falconer to return to at the end of the session. Once these hawks prove that they can survive on their own in wild conditions, they are set free. All taming quickly reverses and the bird becomes wild again.

When we receive three or more chicks of the same species, we have the opportunity to do a wild hack. During a wild hack, the young chicks, which are often still covered in white down but old enough to pick up their own food, are placed in a purpose-built box on a stand. The box is positioned and built in a way to protect the chicks from predators and harsh weather conditions, while still allowing them to be outside as if they were in a nest in a tree. The hack box has a door at the back for access and a drop-down door on the front to keep young birds safe and let them out when they are ready developmentally. There is plenty of airflow through the shade cloth sides and large holes in the front door. The chicks have a balcony and perches to branch out onto, and plenty of room to jump and stretch their wings inside of the box.

In November 2020, I was handed three brown goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) chicks that came through the *Raptor Fliers Association of Western Australia Inc.* The chicks were approximately four weeks old and had

lost their habitat. The two females and one male were all healthy and in perfect condition. Every effort was taken not to imprint the chicks while they were in my close care. Handling them was kept to a minimum and they were never hand fed. They were kept away from human traffic and other animals. These are lessons learned through falconry.

As soon as everything was prepared, the chicks were placed in the hack box. I would feed them through a chute in the back of the box and watch them with binoculars. They developed naturally and imprinted onto each other and their natural surroundings. After nine days the male took his maiden flight, and his sisters followed a few days later. During these early days they spent most of their time at the box sleeping, eating and playing. As time went on, they spent more of their day exploring around the trees away from the box. I would hear the alarm calls from the other birds like magpies, galahs and willy wagtails, as the hawks made their way around the farm. Each day they would return for the meals provided, roosting there at night. Their time away increased until about six weeks after fledging when they would only return for feeding. It was a wonderful experience watching them develop, learning the skills they needed, protecting themselves from attacks and catching their own food. Two months after the birds had fledged, I saw one of the females fly out from the trees. She flew into a group of magpies undetected, grabbed one and returned to the bush with ravens and magpies calling behind her. Success!

These techniques have been perfected and shared by falconers around the world. Falconry and conservation go hand-in-hand. We care about the birds, the food they need to survive and the habitat they require. Our top priorities are the hawks' welfare, keeping the stress levels low and the feathers in perfect condition. Falconry has changed raptor rehabilitation for the better and I'm very grateful to be able to learn and use these techniques in the best interest of the hawks I work with. The bitter sweet taste of falconry rehabilitation, though, is saying goodbye to fully restored raptors that we have built a temporary but reversible bond of trust with. As one chapter ends, another begins as I now have room to welcome another raptor that might require a bit more than conventional aviary-based rehabilitation can provide. I look forward to contributing to conservation and education again as I find it immensely rewarding.

Until then, I have begun flying two new hawks: *Mila*, a little eagle (*Hieraetus morphnoides*) who had been a static display bird for more than ten years and *Speed*, an orphaned little falcon that had been imprinted and handed in to me. I am sure he'll be a wonderful education bird for lure displays.

While I have the intention of continuing to do educational displays with *Mila*, I have used this initial bonding time to satisfy the hunter within and to continue my own learning as a falconer. Being a static display bird and having spent a lot of time sitting on the fist or sitting in an aviary, I have had some difficulty getting *Mila* to fly high. The weather hasn't helped either. Right now in February, it's the hottest time of year for us and most days it's 40°C. Thus, we have focused on flying early mornings off the fist with some success.

In March 2021, I acquired a German wirehaired puppy. My original intention was to use her as a bird dog and, while we have had a lot of fun with that, it has become apparent that we are very good at hunting rabbits. Rabbits are an invasive pest species in Australia, are legal to hunt and readily available most of the year. They are damaging to agriculture and livestock so farmers are happy to give us permission to come out and remove them. I have found the rabbits usually have one or more warrens in an area and travel a considerable distance from home looking for edible food. The eucalyptus trees naturally create large hollows in their limbs after about 200 years and fallen hollows have been adopted by the rabbits as hiding holes. Hollow logs are the most common place that I find them resting during the day. Working with the pointer, we find an active spot and run the ferret down to bolt the rabbits out for the eagle. She has quickly learned the game and is moving forward in leaps and bounds. In the coming winter months when the weather is cooler, I'll put in the effort to encourage her to fly higher and find out what else she is capable of.

Since starting to work with *Mila*, I have been lucky to witness two wild little eagle flights on separate occasions giving me real life examples of what we need to work towards. First, I saw an eagle flying lazily in wide circles, about 70m up. She was checking the pockets of trees peppered around the open paddocks. After passing a small hill covered in natural bush on my neighbour's property, I saw her jink in the sky and tighten her circle. The eagle then closed her wings

behind her and stooped into the bush. I heard the leaves rustle as she entered the trees about 150m away from where I was. A short call and a goshawk flew out alone and over my head. The eagle had robbed him. Then, 20 minutes later, she too left the trees and headed off towards the bushland not far from here.

The second flight was a little special as we contributed somewhat to a successful outcome. I arrived at a rabbit permission with my team and kids. There were rabbits on the driveway and as we pulled up they darted off, one going past the safety of the lavender patch and crossing into the neighbouring paddock. My daughter, Quill, called out "look, Mum, a bird." We looked up to see a little eagle heading in the rabbits' direction. Visibly searching for the rabbit, she manoeuvred around a tree where she spotted it and again folded her wings back and dropped out of the sky in a stoop for a successful catch. Her presence set off the ruckus alarm calls of parrots and magpies ringing loudly. Again, we didn't see her for about 30 minutes until she reappeared from ground level to climb into the sky.

To conclude, for all of those who have been wondering, falconry is alive and well in Australia, and we can see it growing as more and more people discover that there is a way through the red tape to fly birds of prey. While it's not legal for recreational purposes, we will continue to find ways to keep flying and hunting the hawks we love so much. We hope to see more improvements to regulations with state government departments around the country and we will continue to promote high quality raptor conservation and the art of falconry in a positive light wherever we can.



GINA
PIKE

Gina Pike is a veterinary nurse and mum, providing animal services from her farm in Western Australia. She has been working with raptors for conservation efforts for nine years and is heading into her fourth season as a falconer.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



The Falcon and the Bog

Hilary A White

There is a thing they do right before take-off. Standing on the falconer's glove, the peregrine bobs and swivels its head. The eyes – bog-oak black from where I'm standing, several metres away – take readings before the hunt. Then, the chin feathers slowly beard out, breaking the smooth sleek line from lower mandible to chest. The nape follows and, after that, the shoulders and undercarriage. The falcon is changing shape. The set, statuesque, slightly feline, slightly reptilian immaculacy is broken by a vigorous body-wide shudder, as convulsive and involuntary as a sneeze.

The falcon has roused, an Anglo-Norman term for this galvanising tremor. The feathers have been puffed, rumbled, shaken free of any debris and reordered so that nothing is out of place. Falcons can also rouse in mid-air, often when they have found lift. They close their wings for a second, stalling and falling slightly as they do it, before resuming their wingbeats. Something about the neatness of this, the serious business of in-flight housekeeping, lifts me every time I witness it.

The tiercel now loosens its wings and scans the scene a final time. Kevin, the falconer on whose arm it sits, also scans. The crisp blue sheeting of the day is starting to break up. The breeze is just light enough to unsettle the heads of bog cotton. There is a heady pre-hunt tension.

The tiercel's tail slowly lifts and flicks and an egg cup-full of milky faeces – known as a mute – shoots out on to the bog to relieve the bird of a gram or two of weight before take-off. Another tremble, a half-rouse, seems to erupt the moment his scaly yellow toes break contact with the buckskin glove.

Kevin mumbles something steadying to the pointer aiming a stiff nose at the ground. The dog is physically responding to the scent of a snipe that she has detected in a tussock of heather. She will stay there, motionless, as long as the scent retains its proximity and potency until Kevin gives the command to flush. Her black and white coat will be a familiar beacon for the tiercel to position himself by.



Photo credit: Keiya Nakajima

A handful of men and women are assembled near the edge of this bog in County Offaly in the midlands of Ireland. Some carry hooded peregrines that have already flown or are awaiting their turn and there are children and leashed dogs struggling to keep their patience. We all drop into silence as the tiercel begins his climb. It starts out with a couple of low-level swoops and turns, the bird exploring the currents of breeze moving over the bog. Once or twice, he passes so close you can hear a slight rhythmic *heb-heb-heb* as sharp wingtips of rigid feather meet air resistance. His circle broadens as he keeps turning, that widening gyre Yeats warned us about. The tiercel finds the wind and rises in steps, then he bends his angle downwind towards papery birches and dark Scots pines.

Beating wings up and up involves a huge expenditure of energy, so falcons are always looking for lift. In the absence of rising thermals or a hill on which to ride updrafts, Kevin's tiercel is seeking it in the place where the wind is hitting the treeline. His ultimate aim is to position himself in the sky directly over Kevin and his dog. For both wild and trained peregrines, greater altitude means greater speed in the attacking descent, and a larger cone of command over prey that might emerge beneath.

We will wait as long as it takes. Those of us who have gathered here on this bog – part of Ireland's tiny falconry community – relax and begin to turn our regard from the sky to each other. Falconry, the art of hunting with a trained bird of prey, is not an exact science, and, children and dogs aside, this small group of enthusiasts understand this.

I can feel the gentle hug of bog water around the ankles of my boots. I bounce myself slightly in this waterlogged sponge, imagine thousands of years of sphagnum moss layered underneath. This soggy, mossy carpeting provides a berth for so much flora and fauna. In summer, resident curlews nest among the hummocks, hares too; and larks, pipits and dragonflies buzz the airspace. Numberless arrays of invertebrate life thrive here, as do a fascinating host of insectivorous plants that dine on them. In wintertime, they extend a cushioned welcome for migratory snipe. These and the open skies overhead are what bring Kevin, his tiercel and his pointer here today.

Late afternoon sun sneaks under the gunmetal streets of cloud. Away at the edge, it makes silver of the rinsed browns of birch and turns the pine bark Titian red. Up on the bog mound itself, it splits open the purples of the ling heather, ghosts the bog cotton



and bejewels the sodden russets and greens of the moss pillows underfoot.

The tiercel is mounting nicely. He is about half a kilometre downwind from us, and so high up that he is a speck. The pointer is still in position. Kevin's attention moves between the dog, a stone's throw away, and the falcon in the sky. The hawk has found as much lift as it can and is now tracking back towards us at altitude. The scenario unfolding is routine to both the tiercel and the dog, and each animal has an awareness of the other, even at a great distance. A falcon's eyesight is so acute that it can see the pattern of black splotches on the dog's coat and the lines on Kevin's old tweed cap from several hundred feet up.

A snipe's body is roughly the size of a blackbird's, but its beak, slender and sensitive, nearly doubles its body length. Its mottled plumage, a dizzying array of gold and peat, renders the bird all but invisible on the ground. The old Irish name – *Gabhairín reo*, or “little goat of the frost” – refers to a tremulous bleating sound the males produce during display flights.

Ireland's resident breeding population of snipe are among a sad list of native species that has undergone a contraction in numbers from habitat loss. But by the light of October's first full moon, their numbers swell vastly with the annual arrival of tens of thousands of relatives from a range extending from Iceland to the Russian tundra, all navigating by way of celestial and geomagnetic mysteries we may never fully understand. Between roads and towns, pasture and forestry, they can make out the moonlit glisten of wet bogland far below. Watery landscapes are where their long bills are able to probe invertebrate-rich mud. They fix wings in a little closer to their small bodies and begin their descent to the springy surface.

Of this migrant influx, a fraction of snipe will succumb to a falcon's foot. And a tiny fraction of that fraction will succumb to falcons that wear leather anklets and consume the waking thoughts of their trainers. They are not easy to catch. Snipe have extraordinary upwards propulsion as well as a slippery mid-air jink that can evade a raptor at the very last



Photo credit: Keiya Nakajima

second. The falcon is the sniper, the sharpshooter trying to fly down something smaller, more nimble and well used to the threat.

The falconers who hunt these snipe for a dozen weeks each winter in Ireland do so precisely because they are so difficult to catch. While falconry's ancient roots lie in bringing food to the table, it is today merely a drama-delivery device based on a script co-written by a human and a bird. The falcon's storyline follows a routine that leads to a reward – take off from the glove, climb high, chase whatever the dog flushes underneath. Whether the falcon catches its quarry or misses and is called down to be fed by the falconer, there is a meal either way. For the falconer, meanwhile, there is a relationship with a wild animal and the encouraging of its natural instincts to hunt in a way that is spectacular to witness first-hand.

The peregrine's vertical, close-winged "stoop" breaks all speed records in the animal kingdom. Its power and velocity, more than any other trait or behaviour, has secured a prominent place for falcons in human culture over thousands of years. We fashioned gods in their image and incorporated their aerodynamics into fighter jets. We entombed them with our dead and projected their handsome frowns on to Egyptian reliefs and Babylonian statues. Falcons adorn flags, crests, bank notes, business logos and sports jerseys, and are recurring literary symbols everywhere from Mughal epics to Shakespeare and W.B. Yeats. In Ireland, the earliest known falconry reference is from the time of Domnall Mac Murchada, a seventh century King of Tara and a High King of Ireland, who was said to have had among his possessions "*da seabhac selga*" – two hunting hawks.

Western falconers nowadays obtain most of their hawks from aviary breeders, but traditionally, raptors were trapped wild using lures and nets. The hawks were trained and hunted with for the winter before being released in the spring. Without daily interaction with a handler, a bird of prey will revert back to a state of wildness. Because their time in captivity was only temporary, falconry birds never lost their wild inclinations or genetics. Their predatory fire was the very thing man sought from them.

Training techniques for these highly strung creatures were refined over generations. The methods by which present-day falconers train their charges follow the same principles as would have been employed by a falconer



Photo credit Klaus Leix

in ancient Persia. Trust is built through reward and reinforcement. The hawk is then trained to return to a whistle it associates with food. When the time comes to hunt, innate responses spur the raptor to give chase. It is the very same switch that turns young falcons at a nest site from begging their parents for food to pursuing their own prey. I have seen it in my own hawks down the years, launching themselves after something with speed and guile the very first time they fly free. It is as pleasing to watch as a cherry tree coming into bloom.

You can't win affection from a hawk as you can from a dog, but you can earn its trust. The falconer tries to establish a smooth, habitual, business-like dynamic, whereby the falcon's drive to hunt is enabled. The hawks are leashed or free in an enclosed aviary when not in the field, but once their tethers are removed and they take off into the borderless, ungovernable arena of flight, the falconer must trust in the effectiveness of the bird's training. If the relationship experiences a crack,

the hawk can drift mentally and physically and decide to go it alone. Nowhere is the balance of trust more delicate than when the falcon is on the ground with prey that it has caught. In the wild, it is where they are most vulnerable to attack from their own kind, and it makes them instinctively defensive when they are in this position. These days, falconry birds are usually let gorge on their kills, but if something ample and flavoursome such as a woodpigeon or pheasant is caught, the falconer might wish it for themselves. In this case, and in all such cases through the long history of hunting with raptors, the falconer kneels down to a low, unthreatening angle and gently offers an exchange for food presented on his or her outstretched glove. The falcon is usually plucking feathers at this point, and the sudden invitation of de-plumed, ready-to-eat meat is so irresistible that it will release its kill and step on to the glove.

Ten thousand years ago, Ireland emerged from the Ice Age with a moderate and stable climate. In the saucer of the midlands, the thaw left behind an expanse

of shallow gravelly lakes. These became clogged with sedges and sphagnum over eons, mounding upwards and upwards with the help of drenching south-westerlies and decaying as fibrous black peat.

The word 'bog' comes from the Irish *Bogarch* – "soft". It has gathered disparaging connotations over the centuries: the primitive, the untameable, the unworkable, the other. A by-word for the bathroom, even. Something that lacks distinction is "bog-standard". The imperial slur "Bog-Irish" signified peasant backwardness, preliteracy and even racial inferiority.

There is archaeological evidence of peat being burned over a thousand years ago and, by the seventeenth century, it was the main fuel source in Ireland. The Napoleonic Wars saw a commission established to examine how Ireland's bogs could be assimilated to grow hemp and flax for the imperial war effort, but that conflict ended before these plans could be enacted. In 1934, the independent Irish state established a *Turf Development Board* (later *Bord na*



Photo credit: Keiya Nakajima

Móna) in a bid to properly industrialise extraction. Alongside coal, milled peat became a key fuel source for Irish power stations. The local hand-cutting of turf for domestic heating carried on in parallel.

In recent decades, the environmental costs of all of this – the devastated ecosystems and the carbon emissions from the burning of the world’s least efficient fossil fuel – have been recognised, and the peat-milling industry has been slowly wound down. Drains are being blocked in order to ‘re-wet’, and thereby reactivate, peat-generating bogs. In January 2021, *Bord na Móna*, the semi-state company overseeing the industry, confirmed that it was formally ending all peat-harvesting and that it would now devote itself exclusively to renewables, biodiversity action plans, along with reskilling programmes for its sizeable workforce. But much of the ecological damage that has been done cannot be reversed. According to the *Irish Peatland Conservation Council*, less than 10 per cent of the estimated original 311,000 hectares of raised bog

in the Republic is considered to be intact or suitable for restoration works.

To get up onto the bog today meant scrambling up a hacked-away cliff of crumbling chocolate cake. These wounds from centuries of hand-cutting still seep life out of a bog like this. Cutting dehydrates a bog, and releases carbon as well as the nutrients and microbial communities that sustain growth. A wet bog holds these things inside. When I look at this particular patch on satellite imagery, it is an island surrounded by long, gouging claw marks. Not far from here, the damage is even more distressing – black deserts as far as the horizon, broken only by coffin-width drainage channels. Travel down the road a little further, and you see that other horseman of bog extinction, the dark, silent, stultifying monocultures of Sitka spruce plantations.

For Kevin and the half dozen or so other falconers who have organised their lives around flying their hawks here, there are no ledgers of fuel extraction or forestry yield or carbon credits or wind farm development.





Photo credit Klaus Leix

There is only a sky big enough for falcons to climb and stoop, and, in the patches of living bog that survive, a rich berth for winter guests from the north.

The only part of this picture that doesn't worry me is the peregrine ranging around looking for lift. It is a species that was nearly wiped out by DDT and other organochloride pesticides in the mid-twentieth century but decisive action by falconer-scientists, enthusiasts with skin in the game, helped raise a flag in the nick of time. In tandem with the banning of DDT in several countries, wild populations in the US were rebuilt through captive breeding. We have so many peregrines in the wild now that heated battles to stake a claim on urban nest sites are regularly recorded.

Kevin's tiercel has come back overhead. The bird is now waiting on, fixing itself in the freezing upper headwind. Experience tells him what is likely to follow when he positions himself very high and directly over the dog. The tiercel is not performing a task in service to Kevin. You can't order a falcon (or anything, for that

matter) to fly off, climb a thousand feet and wait there. You can only let it discover that when it does, it will be rewarded with the chance to engage its hard-wired drive to hunt for itself.

Just as the falcon's tiny, bracket-shaped profile passes slightly upwind, Kevin huffs a command at the dog to pounce into the tussock. A snipe rockets up out of the cover at shocking speed. The tiercel closes its wings and dives towards earth. The two birds, one seeking safety in height, the other descending in meteoric pursuit, are the fastest things I have seen in weeks. My eyes, so used to backtracking cursors or the wobbly hallway jogs of my son, struggle to keep up.

A millisecond before the peregrine is in striking distance, the snipe jinks expertly. The tiercel skims past and swings upwards again, climbing in the hope of another downward cut; but the snipe has pulled away, clearing the open air and finding thick cover at the edge of the bog. It's over – and probably the umpteenth instance on this island today of a snipe outdoing a falcon. Kevin throws out his lure, a soft leather pad garnished with a quail wing, and the tiercel flutters down onto it. Nothing has been caught but everyone – the falcon, the falconer and the spectators – is satisfied. The dog was steady, the tiercel flew high and stooped hard, and the snipe was wily and strong. The use of a domesticated dog to detect and flush the snipe teed up the drama but, once the snipe was in the air and the falcon giving chase, the odds were the same as they'd be in the wild. At its most basic, stripped-down level, falconry is a desire to have a front-row seat at a natural spectacle.

The tiercel is back on Kevin's glove, and feeding up on the remainder of the quail. All of the falcons here today have been flown except for one young tiercel. I have to get back to Dublin, but I dawdle so that I can watch him be cast off to begin his own climb. The falconer, Don, is opening the braces at the back of his bird's hood in preparation to remove it and set in train those customary pre-flight checks. "Wait!" someone says. "There, over the trees."

We watch a big female peregrine thread herself slowly through the wind out at the edge of the bog. Falconers who hunt regularly in the same location get used to encountering local wild falcons. There have been many cases of them habitually turning up when the falconers arrive and chasing the very same snipe flushed by the dogs. A bigger worry, though, is that

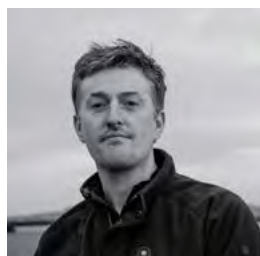
falconry birds are always at risk of being attacked as interlopers by their wild, territorial counterparts, and can be injured and even killed by them. Don's tiercel, a callow brown-plumage bird in its first year, could be overwhelmed by this larger female who would always edge it in fitness and strength. Even if the young falcon evaded physical harm, he could still be chased far from the vicinity. Don would then have an evening of fading light and worry as he tracked the GPS signal emitted by the transmitter the hawk wears.

I wonder where in this land of flatness the height-loving peregrine could be nesting. The answer blinks red, aviation warning lights back at me through the trees: the peat-burning power station, the only tall edifice for miles and miles. Before its construction, peregrines would have passed through here and, finding nothing in the way of a sheltered ledge on a high vantage point, carried on. The old bird books tell you that peregrines belong to upland crags and sea cliffs, but the species' boom since its brush with extinction has enticed it into urban settings. Among cathedral spires, skyscrapers and industrial relics such as Dublin's Poolbeg chimneys, it finds two of its favourite things in abundance – height and pigeons. Here in the midlands, this big female and her mate have made a home for themselves near these bogs by exploiting

a man-made structure, one that happens to be tied to an environmentally problematic past.

Driving home past the black expanses of strip-mined bog, I picture repairs to their hydrology taking hold and the black giving way to green, brown and red. I imagine pouring water out of my son's wellies as a falcon soars above, and bog cotton plucked in small fingers and stashed in a pocket. I place trust in this eventuality from I know not where, like a man willing a bird to return.

First published in The Dublin Review



HILARY
WHITE

Hilary White is a writer, conservationist and falconer living in Dublin, Ireland. His writing on falconry and the natural world has appeared in national and international outlets, and he is currently completing a book about raptors and humans in the city of Dublin. He is a board member of IAF and the *European Foundation for Falconry and Conservation*.



Photo credit Klaus Leix

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



Beyond the Misguided Perception

Bob Dalton

It is an often-repeated statement, and one that, despite its repetition, is no less true because of it, that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.” When it comes to many falconers’ perception of Pakistan, perhaps the word “dangerous” would be better replaced by the word “misleading.” Without wishing to give any offence whatsoever, many falconers, and indeed raptor conservationists, outside of Pakistan view the country as something of a hotbed for illegal trapping and trafficking in raptors. Particularly so in the case of the saker (*Falco cherrug*) and to a lesser degree the “*calidus*” subspecies of peregrine.

All too frequently, the western press regales us with stories of incredible numbers of falcons being trapped and then smuggled out of the country to be delivered to wealthy clients who have no regard at all for the “wildlife rape” inflicted on the donor country in order for these falcons to be brought to marketplace. Unfortunately it is true that illegal trapping and trafficking does, to some degree, take place and that sections of the indigenous populations of raptors suffer quite simply barbaric treatment in order to trap their larger, more valuable cousins. However, it most certainly does not take place anywhere near approaching the scale so freely and oft reported. But then, of course, it is an accepted fact that when it comes to the press and media exaggerating and distorting the facts to suit the story, this practice is very

far from uncommon. Exaggeration of the facts enables the story in question to become more dramatic and occasionally, perhaps, even glamorous. In the majority of cases, the plain simple truth would not make the headlines nor sell papers or increase viewing figures. As a press mogul once famously said “never let the truth get in the way of a good story.”

Not only are reports of trapping and smuggling of raptors grossly exaggerated, but the falconry community of Pakistan is tarred with the same brush, and automatically allocated the role of villains. The media make no distinction between the illegal trade of raptor trafficking and the perfectly legal role of the Pakistani



Kamran Khan Yousafzai with peregrine

Some of the seized falcons in Karachi





Kamran, Bob Dalton and two Pakistani falconers

falconer going about his sport in a traditional manner. A recent event in Pakistan, seized upon by the media from quite a considerable number of countries, was the seizure by Karachi customs officials of a consignment of falcons that had been illegally trapped and were due to be smuggled out of the country to their ultimate destination and client base. Some seventy-four falcons were seized along with a houbara. The falcons consisted of peregrines, sakers, red naped shaheens and three luggers. The luggers, it was assumed, were not intended for illegal export but were in fact *barak* hawks belonging to the trappers themselves. In fact, one of the luggers died soon after being seized by customs officials. Post-mortem examination revealed it to have been punctured in several places by talons and died as a direct result of these wounds. The logical conclusion was that, for a short while, it had indeed survived being used as a *barak* to trap a saker or peregrine but had eventually, as all such bait birds do, paid the ultimate price.

Having seized the entire illegal shipment of falcons, the customs officials were now faced with the very obvious and clearly not insignificant problem of what to do with them. Stepping up to the plate and taking on the immense task was Kamran Khan Yousafzai, President of the *Pakistan Falconers' Association*. In conjunction with customs officials, a building with an outside weathering area was sourced and, with the help of the Rehan brothers, well known falconry equipment suppliers, the extensive list of required indoor and outdoor blocks, hoods, jess and leash sets, which ran into several thousand dollars in total, was rushed from Sialkot to Karachi. Three falconers were hired, and a reliable and consistent food source was sought. Within forty-eight hours each falcon had

new equipment fitted, had been microchipped and undergone a basic veterinary examination.

With the shipment of falcons having been seized by the courts it was obvious that they would have to be tended to whilst the matter of their legality or otherwise was settled in the law courts, a process not noted for its speed. The duration of the falcons' temporary stay in captivity looked as if it may be a considerable one. Finance towards the ever-mounting bills relating to tending to these falcons was not forthcoming from Customs, nor indeed any other government body within Pakistan.

Project Lugger is a UK registered charity dedicated to halting the decline of the lugger in the wild. When the seizure of the falcons occurred, Kamran contacted me and explained the situation. As rapidly as I could, I organised things so that the project donated 100 microchips and applicators as well as a few other much-needed items. The project then arranged for myself and a fellow falconer from England, plus another from Holland, to fly out to Pakistan to join the team in Karachi and help with the day-to-day logistics of tending to such a large number of falcons. This was easier said than done, in actual fact, as Covid, and all the travelling restrictions that ensued because of it, was at its height at the time. In addition, everyone going to help paid their own air fares and Covid testing fees, so each person had to find around £1,000 out of their pockets. However, most falconers are raptor



Hielko Van Rijnthoven helping take care of a peregrine in Karachi

Kamran in outdoor weathering yard with some of the seized falcons



Falcons on their way to the vet for a final examination before their release



conservationists at heart and here was a situation where fellow falconers and a considerable number of falcons needed help. So, time to step up and worry about the money later – and Covid if it happened. In fact, with regard to Covid this led to being asked repeatedly the same, to me, inane question on my return. “Weren’t you scared of getting Covid?”, I would be asked. My response was “no, not scared, terrified, but life has to go on.”

As well as the daily basics of handling and feeding, we carried out jobs such as imping, coping, taking falcons to an appointed vet to be treated when necessary and just generally helping out as and when required. At the end of the volunteer team’s all too brief stay we headed home and set about trying to raise some funds and veterinary supplies to help out. The project put its raptor specialist vets in direct contact with the

Karachi vet treating the falcons and it would appear some interesting long-distance consultations took place. On the final afternoon in Karachi, six falcons arrived that had been seized by the *Sindh Wildlife Department*. Three red naped shaheens and three luggers were duly fitted with equipment, microchipped, given a basic veterinary inspection and added to the throng. One of the shaheens had unfortunately already been used as a *barak* and died the next morning.

The court case regarding the original seizure dragged on and, despite the courts awarding Customs the right to care for the falcons and instigate a process to return them to the wild, the alleged smugglers fought and appealed every decision and the process dragged on, with the effect that the falcons could not be released whilst court proceedings continued. The court settlement had to be final, and all avenues of



The Sindh Wildlife Officers with a soon to be released lugger



The excitement of releasing the lugger back into the wild

appeal finished, before the falcons could move from the compound in Karachi. As the weeks turned into months, I arranged to return to Karachi and help out and another pair of hands from the UK came along to assist. Again, we met all our own expenses and were happy to do so if it helped the falcons.

The legal situation regarding the initial seizure had not changed but a licence had been granted by the *Sindh Wildlife Department* for the release of the two remaining red shaheens and three luggers that were subject to confiscation from the trappers. Accordingly, work was directed towards getting these five falcons in top condition and ready for their return to the wild. One of the shaheens had suffered terrible feather damage to her primaries whilst in the hands of the trappers and needed a thorough imping session before being released. We had no red shaheen feathers, but a local falconer kindly provided us with a full set of primaries from the black shaheen he was flying and had moulted out. I have never carried out an imping job with such care and precision in all my years as a falconer. I knew that getting this right was literally the difference between life and death for this falcon. In the meantime, another red shaheen had been confiscated by the *Wildlife Department* and, having been brought to us with a release licence, would be accordingly added to the group about to get their freedom.

In consultation with members of the *Sindh Wildlife Department*, we picked areas that were suitable for releasing the five falcons and set off on a road trip to do just that. I say five because the *Sindh Wildlife Department* decided to maximise the publicity of their work and, accordingly, the impd shaheen would be held back for a few days and then released by a wildlife officer, which of course would be filmed.

On releasing the first red shaheen, it was a joy to watch her circle the area and then ring up and gradually drift away. An interesting sideshow for me was watching a haggard male lugger dive into a tree quite close to us as the shaheen was released. The lugger didn't move again until the shaheen had completely disappeared from view. We then drove on for another hour or so and released the second shaheen. This falcon, like the first, circled two or three times but then, instead of drifting away, she pumped her wings and drove forward in a straight line till she was lost from sight.

We drove on, heading north towards the city of Sukkur, crossing the River Indus at Hyderabad. A couple



Bob Dalton, realising a dream, of releasing this lugger back into the wild

of hours after passing Hyderabad, we reached the area where the first lugger was to be released. It is almost impossible to put into words my feelings at this point. *Project Lugger* was a charity started by myself almost four years previously. Its aims were to try and halt the decline in the lugger population and try and redress some of the problems encountered by the species in the wild. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that, in my lifetime, I would have stood in a remote area of Pakistan about to return a lugger to the wild that would have most assuredly died a very unpleasant death had she

Kamran
releasing
a red naped
shaheen



not been rescued. Emotions coursed through my veins, and I looked at the lugger in my hands wishing the moment could last. However, the selfish and indulgent moment passed, and the lugger was cast “*down wind to prey at fortune*.” I had named the lugger *Diana* after friend and hawking companion Diana Durman-Walters, who is also a fellow Trustee of *Project Lugger*. The release was dedicated to Noel Hyde and Debbie Stewart of *Wingspan*, the hugely successful project set up and run by falconers to save the New Zealand falcon. They serve as my conservation inspiration.

We drove onwards to a wildlife sanctuary on the outskirts of Sukkur, which is owned by the *Sindh Wildlife Department*. We spent an interesting night in the sanctuary’s lodge and awoke to a wonderful chorus of birdsong. We wanted to release the two luggers before the full heat of the day was upon us so, at first light, they were given good full crops of warm bloody food and then the first was taken to the roof of the three storey lodge and had her equipment cut off. She was released, took to the air and, quite literally, powered up several hundred feet. A kite came across to investigate and the lugger proved how fit she was by giving him a seriously hard time. They chased each other for a couple of minutes before the kite broke off and then the lugger slowly drifted away. We humans retired to the ground floor and had coffee whilst waiting for a full hour to pass before releasing the second lugger. Once the clock had ticked round, we repeated the release procedure and another lugger returned to its rightful place in the wild. Again, for me, the releases were emotional moments that were the culmination of almost four years of hard work and being repeatedly told that you will never ever make one iota of difference. Every conservation project starts with one person and an idea. Hopefully, that idea is contagious and inspires others

and soon numbers grow sufficiently to be able to have a voice and make a difference. No matter how small the difference initially, every step towards true raptor conservation is a positive one.

On our return to Karachi, in conjunction with the *Wildlife Department*, we arranged for the release of the final red shaheen. The episode was to be filmed and I have to admit I was a little nervous as this was the falcon on which I’d had to carry out the major imping operation. Kamran, a wildlife official, a camera crew of two and I proceeded to an exceedingly remote area north of Karachi and the shaheen was released. I had no need to be worried as to her flying capabilities as, immediately upon being released, she flew straight after a harrier and gave it grief for a couple of minutes. I like to think she was venting her frustration at all that had happened to her. Having pressed the harrier so hard that it took refuge in a bush, the shaheen then made two wide circles before heading upwards and away until she was lost to sight.

The following morning we discovered that some more hawks, as yet undisclosed in both number and species, had been confiscated by the *Sindh Wildlife Department* and would be joining us at the temporary base. What was becoming clearer than ever was the simple fact that a proper rehabilitation centre for raptors was required in Pakistan; somewhere equipped to deal with the wide range of species likely to be encountered and fully capable of dealing with all aspects of rehabilitation work. Plans had previously been drawn up by Kamran for a centre that would encompass not only rehabilitation but also conservation. *Project Lugger* would have a base within the proposed centre and would help with supplying experienced staff to work alongside other employees, hopefully passing their

skills along. The simple decision taken by Kamran to go ahead as soon as possible with the centre unleashed, for me at least, a maelstrom of meetings with officials and ministers from various government bodies to try and bring about something that was clearly needed and which would be put to very good use once established. As *Project Lugger* was a small part of the overall picture, my involvement was nothing compared to that of Kamran. Whatever meetings I participated in, be they physical or by Zoom, Kamran could multiply the number a minimum of tenfold.

After a great deal of searching for a suitable site for the proposed centre, one which fulfilled the desired criteria was found in the northern part of Pakistan in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. Nomal Nagar is an area approximately an hour from the city of Gilgit and had almost all the plus points we were looking for. The Nomal valley is sheltered from the worst of the region's winter weather and does not experience the fierce and consistent high temperatures endured on the plains of Pakistan. The one downside to its location at present, as I found out when making a visit to view it, is that currently it is a twelve-hour drive from Islamabad. This will change quite soon, however, as a highway is being built to connect the two cities and travelling time will be cut very considerably. Two more visits to Pakistan and some fourteen more government-level meetings have seen huge progress: the centre is established and building work is progressing as and when funds become available. This major achievement has been brought about by Kamran's relentless drive and determination and the support of fellow Pakistani falconers.

Plans are already being drawn up to carry out raptor surveys, nest monitoring, DNA testing and research. There is an embryonic agreement with a university in Holland to have students mastering in raptor conservation to undertake field work from the site. This is alongside rehabilitation work and research into luggers. The resources that will be available at the centre will most certainly be put to very good and full use.

Thus, finally, a site is being established with government backing and recognition and the future for the indigenous, as well as migratory visiting, raptors of Pakistan looks a little brighter. As already stated, this site will incorporate the home of *Project Lugger Pakistan*. These large strides forward in raptor conservation and rehabilitation, as well as pushing to see the laws regarding raptor protection updated and



Gilgit region
centre for
rehabilitation
and
conservation

actioned, have all been brought about by falconers. Without their knowledge and skills none of this would have been possible. If ever a case of falconry as a direct and effective means of conservation were required, this is surely the example to be cited: falconers from Pakistan facing up to and tackling the problems they encounter with the help of fellow falconers from different countries and cultures. The important thing is they are all working together in harmony in an attempt to bring about a common goal. As Paul Willcock, a falconer from Australia, always says, "We are all brothers under the hood."



BOB
DALTON

Bob has been a falconer for some 53 years and has concentrated mainly on flying longwings. He has travelled to more than forty countries to see and participate in different aspects of falconry although, in recent years, conservation of the lugger has become his priority.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic, Russian
and Urdu





Hare Hawking in Argentina

Juan Jose Pityla

The days become shorter and colder, announcing the arrival of the hawking season. The flight at the hare is one of the most addictive.

Harris' hawks in Argentina are smaller than their cousins up north, weighing 720-820g, while those in the south reach average hunting weights of 800-900g. The difference is not only in the weight, but also in their colouration and morphology. It takes a female from the south five to six moults to reach a colouration similar to that of their central and northern counterparts. Even then, they do not become black, but more dark brown. As per their morphology, those in the south have broader backs and are shorter, with strong feet and 1.5cm shorter tarsi on average.

Regarding hares, adults can weigh more than 4kg and so we have a combination of big hares and small hawks. I prefer to fly imprinted females, so as to win a few more grams of hunting weight. The hares are thus within the range of our Harris' possibilities.

I live in Lago Puelo, Chibut Province, in the heart of Argentinian Patagonia. Hares are abundant and commercial hunting with firearms is allowed, often with very large quantities hunted in the night. The number that an austringer can take in one or two hunting seasons, however, is significantly less.

Close to the mountain range, hawking grounds are small valleys that might have some grassland in the centre, surrounded by bushes and eglantine plants. My preference is for my hawks to hunt from a T-perch to avoid hares from moving bush to bush some 50m in front of the austringer without being detected by the hawk. As we approach the flat land, the ground becomes more arid and windswept with shorter bushes, and thus as the quality and amount of food diminishes, so does the number of quarry. In mid-winter it is common for our hawking grounds to be completely covered by snow with temperatures below -5 Celsius.

At the beginning of the hunting season, young hares average 1.5-2.5kg. That is the best time to introduce our new birds to hare hawking. Young hares up to 2kg are still manageable for the new hawks, and it's fundamental for them to learn as soon as possible to subdue their quarry by taking it by the head, given that as the season advances, the weight of the hares rapidly increases. If they lack technique, they will hardly hold a hare, which may drag them for a few metres.

To introduce our hawk to this type of hawking, it's important it has previously learned to react to the quarry's escape tactics. This is achieved during the first days of training by hiding a hare-like lure in the grass

Utilizing
a T-perch





and suddenly dragging it. A couple of these training sessions are all that is needed for the hawk to learn this pattern. Once the Harris' hawk immediately takes flight at the lure and takes it, it's time to introduce the bird to a real hunting situation.

With the hawk on the T-perch, we walk and beat the field with the help of a beater and a dog if possible. For the first attempts, I personally prefer to look for hares in grasslands with grass 15-20cm in height in which the hawk has more advantage. This would be the same type of ground in which we previously initiated the hawk with the lure. When the first hare flushes, the Harris' hawk follows decisively, reacting to the stimulus of the fleeing prey. If all goes well, and with a bit of luck, we'll have our first quarry in a short time. These first hares will often drag our inexperienced hawk for a long distance (dozens of metres), while the Harris' foots them in the back. Having experienced this many times, I now prefer not to run after my hawks in such situations as it only scares the hare more and makes it run harder, making the situation worse. Conversely, if the Harris' has a better hold of the hare, I do intervene and help the bird to control and dominate the hare, which accelerates the learning curve: the hawk learns to quickly look for and bind to the head. As more outings with our hawks take place, they will gain more experience; if the hawk initially foots the hare in another part of the body, it will immediately move one

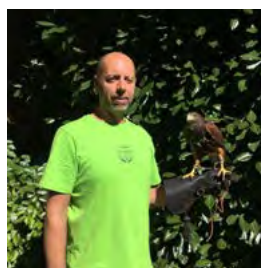
of its feet to the head with a strong hold, precluding a kick from the hare's feet or being dragged. In the case of birds in their first hawking season, it's wise to stop hunting when hares reach 3.5kg at the most, given that if the hunting technique has not been perfected by then, the hawks risk being severely injured. It's better to let them rest and finish with the development of such skills in the next season. Experienced hawks might continue hunting and capture hares up to 4.2-4.5kg.

Hare hawking is exciting and tests the limits of our Harris' hawks. If the abundance of hares in this region is high, we have the luxury of choosing to release the females when captured and only bag the males, as we all know that well-stocked hawking grounds guarantee a good hawk.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



JUAN
JOSE
PITYLA

Juan Jose Pityla is a veterinarian and former assistant at the first course for non-traditional animals at the *School Hospital of Buenos Aires University's Veterinary Science Faculty*. He is also Director of the *Patagonia Raptor Breeding Project*.



Hunting with
a T-perch in
the evening

A Partnership between *Lepus*, the *Iberian Hare Reproduction Centre*, and Portugal's *National Falconry Association*.

Partnership
formalisation
between
*Iberian Hare
Reproduction
Centre* in
Portugal and
the *National
Association
of Falconry*.

On 9th January 2022, representatives of the *Iberian Hare Reproduction Centre* in Portugal (www.lebre-iberica.pt) and many members of the *Portuguese Association of Falconry* (APF) met in Torres Vedras, Portugal. The objectives of this meeting were: 1. To show the APF the work that had been developed over the two previous years at the *Iberian Hare Reproduction Centre*; 2. To discuss the status of the species in its wild habitat; 3. To discuss strategies and objectives for the

future and 4. To formalise a platform for discussion and for scientific sharing between the two entities.

The *Iberian Hare Reproduction Centre* started its activity as a producer of animals for re-population in October 2021 and has a main breeding nucleus of 24 animals. The production capacity is estimated at 200 hares per year. The centre distinguishes itself from its peers due to the intertwining of its knowledge of both animal production and health and it is in the vanguard of research institutions in this area of activity.

The centre has established several links with academia and I&D institutions (public and private sector companies focused on agriculture, education, and forest/evnvironment) to receive students for their internships, to support fundamental and applied research and to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience. We are currently studying vaccination strategies in Iberian hares along with feeding regimens, genetic and behavioural selection and the importance of sympatric species in training animals for re-population. We are also investigating assisted reproduction techniques.

Our motto is "Preparing hares for the wild" and we focus not on the number of animals raised per year, but on ensuring that all animals leaving the centre know



Iberian hares





Juvenile Iberian hares born in the breeding centre



Two adult female Iberian hares belonging to the reproductive nucleus

The construction of beds, and exposure to edaphoclimatic factors and their intra and inter-annual variation, are very relevant adaptations to the field.



Scan for Spanish, French and Polish



Scan for Chinese, Arabic and Russian



their sympatric species, can recognise a large number of their predators and are healthy and morphologically fit for life. We frequently assess the morphological conditions of the animals, their speed and their camouflage abilities, bearing in mind that these are their

primary survival strategies. Contact with humans is also minimised as much as possible. Our aim is to have the animals develop a natural or acquired immunity to their main threats and escape and protection strategies that allow them to survive in the wild.



The landscape of the breeding centre varies throughout the year to simulate the reality of the countryside.

In Memoriam

Matt Gage: falconer, academic and invaluable servant of the IAF

Remembered by Adrian Lombard

My introduction to Prof Matt Gage occurred at the 2004 IAF AGM, hosted by the *Emirates Falconry Club* in Abu Dhabi.

This meeting was seminal to the IAF in several ways as it heralded the growth of the organisation as a relevant conservation INGO as well as establishing it as a global representative for falconry. On a personal level, this was my introduction to the workings of the IAF; it was where I first met the individuals involved in the voluntary work that supports our organisation and which lies behind its growth in stature. Many of these individuals have since become lifelong friends and colleagues, and one of these was Matt. At this meeting, Matt presented the IAF “Mark and Bank” proposal for regulating the trade in raptors for falconry. I was immediately impressed. Matt’s youthful appearance and easy manner were apparent, but his presentation was delivered with a clarity that made its important content immediately accessible. This was, and remains, an invaluable proposal; well-considered and argued. Over the subsequent years, I have revisited and argued for the proposal and will always remember its first presentation. Matt’s superb intellect and ability to explain and to teach were well demonstrated and I learned to value these in later work in the IAF. His death on 15th January 2022 came as a considerable shock to those of us that were unaware of his illness. At the young age of 55, after an illness that was bravely borne, the IAF has lost an invaluable supporter. Our loss is no greater than the loss to his family, his friends and the scientific community within which he worked.

Matt was an accomplished and committed falconer. He spent time in his childhood on the island of Rathlin, off Northern Ireland, which was his ancestral home. It was here that he developed his bond with nature and those skills were born, as both falconer and fly-fisherman, that grew with him through life. A friend recalls that he dreamed of flying a falcon over pointers on a Scottish grouse moor from the age of 11 and achievement of this dream started with the acquisition of a Harris’ hawk



and a pair of ferrets. It grew until he became a master falconer, flying superb peregrines, which he bred himself, at grouse, over excellent pointers. Indeed, both his peregrines and his dogs became so memorable that they are the stuff of legends amongst his friends.

He completed his PhD at the *University of Manchester*, and it was here that he met Silvie who was, later, to marry him. He had a post-doctoral fellowship to the *University of Western Australia* and then returned to the *University of Liverpool*, having won a prestigious Royal Society Research Fellowship. He then transferred to the School of Biological Sciences of the *University of East Anglia* where he worked until his death. He led a laboratory group with primary interests in reproductive biology, sexual selection and the evolution

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



of sperm – form and function. He has been described as an inspirational evolutionary ecologist, conducting pioneering research, and was a prodigious author of many scientific publications in journals which included *Nature* and *Science*. He is described as producing work of the highest quality, characterised by clear thinking, original insights and rigorous empirical tests of fundamental theory. His colleagues do not remember him simply as an outstanding scientist, however. They also describe him as an exemplary mentor and a natural leader. He has been described as a complete gentleman, always ready to offer help and to listen patiently.

One of Matt's outstanding abilities, which made him invaluable as a supporter of the IAF, was his ability to take complex scientific concepts and make them accessible to a lay audience. The management of the sustainable use of wild hawks is a subject of real importance to falconers. There is a necessity to address illegal trafficking of raptors as this is a blight on the reputation of our art. Matt's work encapsulated in the "Mark and Bank" proposal provides a practical means to manage wild harvests, on a large or a small scale. It also provides a means to thwart illegal trafficking and laundering of wild raptors into captive populations. What would be required for its implementation is the will amongst conservationists and authorities to do so.

Another area of concern where Matt's scientific insight and clear incisive thinking has been invaluable is in the addressing of concerns relating to the potential for hawks

becoming invasive alien species, and to the introgression of captive raptor genes into wild populations. Matt had the ability to analyse these concerns and to provide the necessary perspectives to allay fears of potential threat. Emotive and "anti-use" challenges were made against the practice of falconry and the use of non-indigenous species and subspecies as well as hybrids. Someone of Matt's calibre was required to address these concerns and, as the IAF President called upon to confront this challenge, I shall be forever grateful for his willingness to support us and address these concerns in a manner that was calm, well-reasoned and irrefutable.

Matt was a remarkable husband and father, deeply loved and missed by his wife and two daughters. It is one of the peculiarities of a volunteer-driven international NGO, such as the IAF, that close friendships are forged in infrequent face-to-face meetings and email correspondence. I am sad that I have never met Silvie or his daughters and can only apologise for selfishly stealing the time of husband and father from them for IAF service. Please know that the time he gave so selflessly is very deeply appreciated. There are few people of Matt's calibre, and he was there when we needed him. There will be memorials to his life. These include his daughters and the work that he achieved; but there will be others. These include, I believe, a tree planted in the Wicklow Valley overlooked by a peregrine eyrie and a little place in the hearts of all of us who knew him and called him "friend".



In Memoriam

The Hon. Johnny Morris (1951-2022)

Remembered by Hilary White

Healthy though it might seem these days, falconry in Ireland had to be rebuilt in the 20th century. The advent of the shotgun had seen falconry dwindle in many nations during the 18th and 19th centuries, but Ireland had the added burdens of colonialism, famine and poverty which stripped cultural heritage to its bare bones and led to a largely disconnected, utilitarian view of the landscape. Independence was hard won in the 1920s, and for a nation still classified as Third World, there was little time, resources or determination for a hunting art that required ample amounts of all three. The traditions that Ireland enjoys today, from language to mythology, were kept alive through these times by small groups of impassioned and erudite devotees, and falconry was no different. Johnny Morris, who passed away in January aged 70 after a long and difficult illness, was fundamental to the gradual revival of the art in modern Ireland.

The son of Lord Killanin and part of the Morris hereditary line of western chieftains that is one of the fabled Fourteen Tribes of Galway, Johnny was obsessed with falcons and falconry growing up in the windswept and dramatic region of Connemara. By the time he was a lad, his father suggested it was time to visit a local falconer up the road in Oughterard who might help sculpt this enthusiasm into something more robust. It so happened that that falconer was Ronald Stevens, a latter-day guru whose writings to this day encapsulate better than any other the craft and spirit of hunting with falcons. Johnny would stay with his maternal grandfather, the Rector of Oughterard, and cycle the 15-mile round trip to Stevens' house to learn all he could.

What began was one of the most famous falconry partnerships in the world, and precisely the kind of inter-generational transmission of knowledge that has made falconry a jewel in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage crown. By learning from Stevens, Johnny joined a lineage of mentors that went back more than a century through Gilbert Blaine, Major Charles Hawkins Fisher and John Pells, falconer to the Duke of St Albans.



Morris and Stevens were among the founding members of the *reconstituted Irish Hawking Club* in 1967, partly out of a desire to have a mothership for Irish falconers to meet and engage, but also out of a need to “obtain some control” of Irish eyries, especially from “profit making and overseas falconers”.

At 18, Johnny was able to acquire an Iranian saker falcon through the US falconer and archivist S. Kent Carnie, who was then posted in the Middle East. *Farah* was her name and, fed up with more than a decade of trying and failing to breed Irish peregrines, Stevens suggested they pair her with his tiercel. To the amazement of the two men and the falconry world who subsequently got wind of it, the odd couple hatched the first hybrid falcons ever bred in captivity, one of which would go on to adorn today's bank note for the United Arab Emirates.

Among his many professions, Morris's father had been a celebrated Fleet Street journalist in his day, and perhaps this played a role in encouraging Johnny to use this medium to search for falconers in Ireland. A 1976 classified ad in the *Irish Times* simply stated that the *Irish Hawking Club* was being reformed and that interested persons should contact the Hon. John Morris by post. Morris and the then tiny huddle of falconers he flew with were aware that, having recently joined the EEC, Ireland would soon be subject to a revision of

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



wildlife law to bring it in line with European standards. A formalised representative body was urgently needed to plead the case for falconry.

To this day, a facility exists within Irish legislation for a small annual harvest of raptors that has proved massively enriching for licensed falconers here, myself included. The journey of wild take is a privilege we share in Ireland with many counterparts around the world, but things might have been different were it not for the awareness and mobilisation of Johnny and his peers.

On a personal level, meanwhile, an excursion hawking with Johnny at the age of eight was my very first falconry touchstone, one that would prove indelible. It was therefore a personal honour in 2015 to present Johnny, on behalf of then-IAF President Adrian Lombard, with the IAF Presidential Award for “exceptional services to Irish Falconry”. By that time, Johnny was already an Honorary Life Member of both the *Irish Hawking Club* and the *British Falconers’ Club*, but the IAF still saw the value in international terms

of recognising a figure who had espoused the ethos of sustainable use with a mind to future generations.

A voracious reader and amateur historian, with a teacherly generosity that sought to share that knowledge without ever lecturing, Johnny was softly spoken, curious of mind and held falconry second only to his wife Thelma Mansfield (a painter and former TV presenter in the fledgling years of Irish state broadcasting) and their two sons, Roderic and Michael (a musician and painter, respectively).

At a funeral in South Dublin, Johnny was laid to rest by a large group of family and friends who heard about the devoted husband and father, nature lover and photographer who bent life into the shape that he wanted, one where time spent with family or under high-flying hawks was all that really mattered. A longwing guard of honour had stood by the doors to the chapel before the service. Two Irish tiercels from this contingent slipped inside to find a pew, only to duck out before the end of the ceremony to go flying in the nearby hills before light faded. You can be sure they had his blessing.



In Memoriam

Michael Kenneth Nicholls (1952-2021)

Remembered by Maurice Nicholson

Dr Mike Nicholls passed away at the *Pilgrims Hospice* in Canterbury on 9th November 2021 after a long battle with cancer, leaving behind his wife Margaret and sons Tom and Ben. Born in 1952 in Stockport in the north of England, Mike had an early introduction to falconry when, as a teenager, his father took him to visit Philip Glasier's *Falconry Centre* at Newent. That day in Gloucestershire proved to be his initiation into a lifelong passion for hawks and soon he was flying a kestrel, then later a sparrowhawk, and learning the rudiments of falconry. His life soon became centred around this new passion. From then on, he had to have a mews in his garden and all his free time and holidays were spent flying his hawks. When he married Margaret and had his boys, Ben and Tom, they too were inducted into this hawking world. Goshawks, merlins, red naped shaheens and peregrines were all flown with great endeavour as the years moved on.

Mike was a fine scholar and completed his MSc in Ecology and Genetics at *Liverpool University*, later earning his doctorate there for his work on the genetics of grasses. In time, he was to meld his passion for falconry into his fine academic career in which he had much work published, receiving many citations for his expertise. His teaching life was largely based at *Canterbury Christ Church* as well as the *University of Greenwich* and the *University of Kent*. He lectured not only in ecology, biodiversity and genetics but he also became an expert in work-based and distance-learning programmes. Merlins were initially at the centre of his raptor academic studies; later he used his expertise in genetics when he undertook a study of the DNA of the British peregrine falcon.

Early in the new millennium, Mike came over to Ireland to see the newly evolving sport of snipe hawking and soon he was hooked. From then on, he arrived on the ferry from the United Kingdom a few times



a year during the snipe hawking season, usually taking in an *Irish Hawking Club* field meet during his stay. He always brought with him a copious supply of his home made elixirs of life which he dispensed to all and sundry. He was a wonderful hawking companion and always full of fascinating information on the natural world he loved so well. Above all, he was a man of great kindness and generosity and with an easy manner that endeared him to everyone he met.

On 20th November 2021, just eleven days after Mike's passing, we gathered on Glencar Bog in Co Kerry during our field meet and built a cairn (a commemorative pile of stones) in his honour. Some beautiful words were spoken, some tears were shed but there were plenty of smiles too as we toasted the memory of our friend before we moved off to hawk the elusive Kerry snipe. Glencar is in an area of outstanding natural beauty and had been a favourite snipe hawking haunt of Mike's. As the years pass, we will continue to add our rocks to the cairn on our hawking visits there and remember with great affection our brother in falconry.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian



Photo credit: Don Ryan.

THE VALUE OF SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE

Tony James

Falconers are, at first glance at least, an insular group of individuals who use methods to suit their own purposes in their own circumstances, and who pay little attention to what others, with different ambitions and circumstances, might do. At least that's how we might appear.

However, just a little scratch at the surface reveals a very different reality; falconers are, and always have been, influenced by others who have developed greater understanding or success in certain aspects of our common passion, be that in the mews or the field, in the hawking vehicle or on the weathering ground. We're constantly looking for ways to improve what we do, even if we don't recognise the fact, and are ever willing to assimilate what we learn from others into our own practices.

As falconers, our daily preoccupation is with the management of our hawks, and we're unlikely to give much thought to the origins of the equipment and methods we use. We might give praise to our immediate mentors, but seldom look further back in time than that. However, each of us, often without recognising it,

are heirs to centuries, indeed millennia, of accumulated falconry wisdom.

When we hood a hawk, for example, our thoughts are with the here and now, not with who first instructed us on its use, nor with the history of the practice, but that history is fascinating, and well worth giving some thought to.

Western falconers were unfamiliar with hoods and hooding until the 13th century, when Frederick II

American falconer, Hub Quade, joins the grouse hawking party in Scotland, led by French falconer Philippe Justeau and his wife, Patricia



British and French falconers celebrate after a successful flight





German falconer, Christian Saar, is thrilled with the fit of a hood, just presented to him as a gift by American falconer and hood maker, Bill Barbour

to rediscover much about falconry through its rich literature, and the modern 'founding fathers' in those communities, along with the inevitable 'trial and error', made good use of that literature to replicate much of that which had been learned through many generations of experience.

Again, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to falconers who took the trouble to record their experiences and to share their knowledge. However, whilst falconry literature offers considerable insight into the development and spread of falconry methods and philosophies, much of our development is organic and unrecorded — our Intangible Cultural Heritage if you will. Conversation and exchanges between experienced falconers leads to almost imperceptible change, and benefits each of us.

Early in 2019, during a meeting of the French falconry association, ANFA, I found myself sitting at a dining table, surrounded by eminent and educated

became aware of the possibilities through his contact with Arab falconers. Until that point, seeling hawks was the preferred method and, despite the introduction of the hood, continued to be commonly practised (often in conjunction with the hood) for some centuries after. Such ancient history is often overlooked, as also is the more recent history. From that early introduction of the hood, the process of development and refinement has continued, and continues still.

From the development of various patterns, to suit various circumstances and types of hawks, the original Arab hood has travelled across continents, been used, refined, developed, and now, after receiving the attentions of US hood makers in recent decades, there's a very good chance that your hoods, like mine, owe a debt of gratitude to Arab, European and American falconers. To this day, distinct varieties of hoods exist to suit individual circumstances and preferences, but almost every hooded hawk today owes its mental and physical comfort to a thousand years or more of cooperative development. Hoods and hooding are just one tiny example of the value of sharing.

Very little in falconry is new and falconers from communities with a truly unbroken line of falconry heritage will, generally speaking, be using methods that would be recognised and understood by their distant ancestors.

Those of us from new, disjointed or broken lines of falconry heritage have, of necessity, been forced

French falconers, Richard Percheron (here with his daughter) and Jean-Claude Dufour, eager to set out for the field



At an event at the *Musée de la Chasse* in Gien, delegates included ANFA president Benoit Labarthe, Jacques Renaud, and IAF president HE Majed Al Mansouri.

Scan for Spanish,
French and Polish



Scan for Chinese,
Arabic and
Russian





The late Roger Upton shares his work about, and memories of, Lundy Island, with British austringer Chris Frearson. Both as excited as one another

members of the falconry family, when the conversation turned to literature, as one friend told of a book he'd recently read, *1000 Years of Annoying the French*. Given the setting, perhaps not the most appropriate of book titles, but it seemed that everyone had read it and shared the opinion that it was an entertaining and amusing read. I kept quiet, until I was asked the question I'd feared might come — "Tony, have you read it?"

Before replying I thought for a moment, but there was nowhere to hide. "I'm ashamed to say, I've read something like 500 falconry books, but I've never actually read a book that wasn't connected to falconry." Despite being amongst falconer friends, the shame I felt was real, until, in an act of kindness, the silence was broken by the words of IAF president, H.E. Majed Al Mansouri; "Tony, don't be ashamed. That makes you a specialist."

Majed went on to say that one could learn everything about life through falconry literature — not just falconry itself, but history, culture, ethics, conservation and so much more.

At the time, I appreciated the kindness, but didn't completely grasp the wisdom.

There we were, friends from all corners of the world, sitting around a table, brought together by a shared passion. Friends from diverse backgrounds, diverse financial circumstances, with diverse occupations and personalities, and yet friends nonetheless. We talked with great enthusiasm about all things falconry and, as if by osmosis, each of us took something from the evening's conversation and became richer by doing so.

The following day I was required to make a speech at the *Musée de la Chasse* in Gien, France, centred around the long history of association and cooperation between British and French falconers, which took on added personal significance after that dining table conversation. Connections, exchanges, friendships, shared experiences and knowledge between falconers have long been an important aspect of falconry, which have led to continued and continuing development of the art; from the introduction of the hood to western falconry, by Arab falconers, via Frederick II in the 13th century, to the introduction of GPS transmitters in the 21st. It's a never-ending process of development that no individual experience, no matter how valuable, could ever bring about.

Refined falconry is utterly dependent on the sharing of knowledge.



TONY JAMES

Aside from being a very proficient and dedicated falconer, mainly flying merlins and peregrines, Tony's passion for falconry is matched only by his enthusiasm for the sport's heritage. A long-time member of the *British Falconers' Club* and the *French Association Nationale des Fauconniers et Autoursiers* (ANFA), he has also worked in various capacities within IAF, for whom he now heads the Cultural Working Group. In this capacity, he was instrumental in setting up the recent "Sharing the Knowledge" online presentations. He is a Director of the *British Archives of Falconry* and is currently completing an exciting project to translate a scarce 16th century French treatise into English – a most practical example of his passion for "sharing the knowledge".



WWW.IAF.ORG

