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Flying a free Goshawk

Dani wakes up at 5.00 in the morning. It is the end of September. The summer is ending, but is not so hot in the north of Spain, in Cantabria, where Dani lives. He takes a cup of coffee and goes to the forest just one mile from his house. Anybody will say that he is going hawking except for the falconer's bag he is carrying-

After ten minutes walk, he starts shouting and suddenly a beautiful goshawk comes from nowhere. She has been free the whole day, she spent the night in the forest and she comes as soon as Dani arrives. She catches the lure bravely, and then she jumps to the fist and looks for a new prey.

When Dani Castañeda, a forest patrol officer in love with raptors and falconry, said he will have some free goshawks in the forest living at hack and that they will hunt with them nobody thought it was possible. But it is. And what Dani wants will be done. He reared the goshawks as a group from day one. He fed them every day with the lure. No weight reduction. Birds grown fast and soon they were flying around the area. But they will always come to the lure. Dani is methodic and persistent. So he goes every day exactly at the same time to an exact location. And the female is always there, waiting for him.



She started killing her own prey quickly. But she liked to go on the fist of the falconer and use the glove as a perch. She looks for prey as if she was in yarak. But she is really in the perfect weight, the same as if she was totally wild, and she prefers going with Dani more than hunting for herself.

The wood is dense in Cantabria and the valleys are difficult to climb. Sometimes the goshawk kills at three kilometers from the point where she was released. Dani has to go up, then down, and then up again. But she is always waiting with pheasant, and after the meal, she goes up to Dani's glove. She will be there for some time, but then she flies again and goes to reach her perch, in a big pine, where she rests for the major part of the day.

She has captured pheasant, hare, even pigeon. The videos of her pursuing wild pigeons are very famous in youtube, because she looks like a wild bird. But she wears jesses and is closed ringed and she belongs to Dani. Or maybe she does not belong to anybody but the wilderness? 🦅

Fernando Feás.





Editors Forward

After 19 seasons our beloved tiercel Nelson has finally completed his wonderful life leaving us this spring with so many memories and a whole team of his children who now fill my mews. It has been a great privilege and joy to have been so blessed in my way of life of falconer in the 20th and 21st centuries. Of course his last two seasons lacked the quality and enthusiasm of the previous 17 but for all who knew him and saw him fly he provided insight into falconry inspiring dreams of what is possible when it all comes together. He unexpectedly came into my life as my first and unintended imprint, necessitated by nursing his temporarily damaged eye at just a few days old. The eye soon healed, the whole process took him from being parent reared into my personal care as an imprint and a fresh canvas. Together we each contributed to reveal an unknown wonder,

every day another opportunity for a new picture to unfold in the art that is falconry. Between us we created a relationship that gave me a new way of life, a fulfillment which now, 20 years later, has become wholly absorbing and fulfilling. Until his hatching I had travelled the world flying hawks in the adventure of new countries, new quarry and new friends but from his time of tame hack onwards Nelson showed me ever new depths of perfection to falconry in my home parish. Red legged partridge were his first excitement and the quarry on which he honed his skills at a time when agriculture still allowed a good number of wild coveys. Soon his waiting on was frequently 'out of sight' and the only option was to listen for sound of ripping canvas watching the flushed covey until one bird suddenly seemed to explode in a cloud of feathers!



Perhaps some of my fondest memories are of his challenge with golden plover. We used to have huge flocks during winter on the endless green fields of young wheat but before these flocks arrived we used to get the early birds on the fresh tilled plough soon after harvest. Small groups of a dozen birds or less could be found and when properly flown they would clump like partridge and with the help of a good dog could be flushed for thrilling flights. Not many were brought to book but Nelson never tired of the challenge. Sadly for some reason, probably subtle agricultural changes, after a few seasons the plovers stopped coming and we had to find new quarry.

It was not until he was about six years old that we started using him as a semen donor and for the next 10 years we gradually bred my current team of hawks. All imprinted, now with more time in our retirement they have become a way of life for my family and as I write they all sit watching from the mews where they prefer to finish the moult amid life in the yard after the excitement of egg laying is over.

Today in summer sunshine I am privileged to reflect on so many years of joyful falconry shared with Nelson and my dogs, to celebrate the amazing good fortune of his being in our lives.

The ongoing challenge of new members for the team is very similar to other aspects of life and this coming AGM will see the next step forward for IAF as our new president is elected. Our two candidates have offered some personal background in this edition of the Journal. How fortunate we

are to have such outstanding people willing to offer so much for us all. It's not easy being president of any organization and the sacrifice each individual makes to serve is seldom appreciated, often much abused. As our current president's term of office draws to a close our celebration of his long service for IAF and great contribution to falconry in so many areas will be most meaningful in the falconry we each conduct today in so many different parts of this world.

IAF members have proven their belief and courage for the association to plough its own furrow, relying on our history of credibility built by the voluntary work of its membership. At the end of the day it has always been the passionate determination of a few individuals that has carried falconry through unforeseen challenges. No amount of professionalism or commercialism has that clarity of instinct.

As we celebrate the success of Frank Bond's presidency and that of his predecessors the upcoming new presidency has past experience to guide us as well as another opportunity to refresh vision, take advantage of the work already done, renew friendships, focus application and move forward with renewed determination in our mission. 🦅

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The legend of Tbilisi



The legend about the foundation of Tbilisi: one day the Georgian king Vakhtang Gorgasali was hunting in the environs of Tbilisi. His falcon caught a pheasant, but soon both disappeared, only after some time King Vakhtang found his bird, both fell into a sulphur spring and were boiled. As the sulphur spring was warm, king Vakhtang decided to call this place Tbilisi. 'Tbili' means "warm" in Georgian and according to his will the capital of Georgia changed from Mtskheta to Tbilisi. 🦅

ADRIAN LOMBARD – IAF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE 2012



I was out in the field at first light this morning, with my Black Spar on weight and Bonnie my Brittany bitch, both quivering with excitement and desperate to hunt. I can think of no better way to start a day and I give thanks for each time I can take the field and experience that bond with nature that is so special to Falconers. I have had the wonderful good fortune to do this, at least sporadically, over the past 45 years, and I hope that the same good fortune will allow me to continue for at least a little longer.

But, I have experienced life with legislation that has forbidden falconry and I am only too well aware of the many misguided and ill-informed people who will deride and attack our Hunting Art. So, due to my passion for falconry and the deep pleasure that I take from the company of other falconers I am prepared to address the challenges that threaten the right of myself and of other falconers to fly our hawks and fly them on wild quarry in the best style and traditions of our Art.

The Early Years.

I was born in Harare, Zimbabwe (then Salisbury, Rhodesia) in 1953. My first real exposure to Falconry came through the

father of a friend, Dr. John Condry, who was to become my falconry mentor and a wonderful role-model in my confusing adolescent years. My first real hawk was a Lizard Buzzard, trapped on a Balchatri and, with this improbable bird, I went on to make my first kills – skinks, a striped field mouse and a large brown house snake, using the technique of young boys where hours of walking with your hawk will produce opportunities.

I had the good fortune to go to Falcon College for my secondary schooling. This school is situated 50 kilometers from anywhere in scrubby acacia bush veldt and was established in the administrative buildings of the failed “Falcon gold-mine”.



The mentor of my early falconry years - John Condry.

This was at a time before Falcon College had any association with falconry, but my good fortune followed me. My house-master was uncharacteristically enlightened and permitted me to practice falconry instead of the more conventional and otherwise compulsory cricket and rugby. I also met Peter Steyn, the world renowned raptor photographer who was a teacher at the school and whose career as a photographer was just starting. I was able to help him by building hides and searching for raptors and their nests. My falconry progressed; I flew a Wahlberg's Eagle which was lost into a thermal, a Shikra that gave myself and a small group of boys hours of excitement searching for hunting set-ups and then an eyas Lanner – procured for me by my life-long friend, Roger Neilson. That Lanner and I had fun. I learned to take her to the mine-dumps and let her thermal out of sight, past specks that may have been vultures or eagles. I would then walk back to the school fields and call her down in a breath stopping vertical stoop to the lure. She spent time at tame hack but I was asked to catch her up for rugby matches as she was convinced that the ball was kicked into the air for her entertainment. Hunting her, without a dog, was less successful. I had to improvise and tried all sorts of ploys, like waiting her on above a mine shaft into which I threw stones to chase out the rock pigeons for her.

In 1970, the legislation governing wildlife and hunting in Rhodesia was reviewed and formalized. John Condry started the Rhodesian Falconry Club (now Zimbabwean Falconry Club) and he worked with a senior official of the National

Parks Board, Ron Thompson, to formulate the policy that would regulate falconry in the country. I became a founder member of the club and this was my first exposure to falconry legislation and negotiation of policy.

University and the Bush War

I started my medical studies in 1972 at the University of Rhodesia. I still remember my first day on moving into Residence and finding an eagle perched on the lawn. This was my introduction to Ron Hartley who was to become a firm friend and falconry companion. I helped Ron catching his first Hawk Eagle, the legendary Oswa and then with a series of stunning Black Sparrowhawk muskets. With work pressures, much of my falconry was vicarious but I found that I could manage a Hawk Eagle, which could be night-hawked on hares and flown on gamebirds when time permitted. Dave Fowler was a close friend and falconer. He was a policeman and served in the B-Cars or “rapid response” unit. It raised a few eye-brows when he would pitch up at residence to collect me and the Hawk Eagle in his Police B-Car for the evening. We would drive around the outskirts of town, looking for hares on open fields and I had to hide myself and the Hawk Eagle under the back-seat if he was called to respond to some crime.

Qualification was followed by Housemanship and Military service in the Bush war. There were limited opportunities for falconry but the war fortunately ended in 1980. At this stage, I was married with two small children and career prospects led me to Cape Town.

Cape Town and Falconry in the Western Cape.

Changing countries and following a career path seldom take account of one's hobbies and passions. I found myself in the Western Cape where falconry was prohibited and, without contacts, there was certainly no prospect of practicing any sort of Falconry. In 1991, I gathered my growing family into a most unreliable Landrover and set out for our first real holiday. The plan was to show them something of Africa. We set off on a rough camping trip through Botswana, visiting





Adrian with his wonderful black Spar.

the Makadikadi Pans, the Okovango swamps and through the Savuti to Chobe and then into Zimbabwe at the Victoria Falls. We then made our way down to my old school, Falcon College, where Ron Hartley was teaching and had established the famed school Falconry club. Ron and I went out with his hawk and I realized that, for me, things had to change. Ron told me of Ed Oettle, who was living in the small town of Wellington, close to Cape Town and who had found a way to practice Falconry in the Western Cape.

On my return to Cape Town, I made contact with Ed and we have become firm friends. Ed had managed to prize acceptance of falconry from the Conservation Authorities in the Western Cape and I joined him in negotiating a Provincial Falconry Policy that has become a model for Falconry Policies across the provinces in South Africa. In due course I also met the other prominent South African falconers including Tim Wagner who was the first Chairman of the South African Falconry Association (SAFA) and who made a significant contribution to obtaining acceptance of falconry in the old Transvaal Province and within South Africa. Somewhat by default, I became Secretary of SAFA and then its representative to the Bird of Prey Working Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust and then the South African Delegate to the IAF. I realized that my country and quarry base suited the flying of a Black Sparrowhawk, and then discovered that their temperament and hunting style suited my nature. Over the years, I have occasionally flown Lanners, Peregrines and Rufus-breasted Sparrowhawks with limited success, as well as a wonderful Northern Goshawk, but I always gravitate back to the feisty, irascible and thrilling Black Spars.

Latter Years and the IAF

Edmund Oettle made contact with Christian de Coune as he realized the benefits of belonging to an international

organization in our struggle to have falconry legitimized in the Western Cape. Christian came out to visit and then attended the SAFA National Field Meet near Bloemfontein. Christian had the wonderful ability to adapt to any circumstances and to share his delight in falconry with all around him. I fondly remember the night at the SAFA Field Meet when he was obliged to sit on the floor with us waiting for chicken casserole to cook on a gas stove, while drinking most inferior cooking sherry and at the same time making all about him feel that they were doing him a favor!

As SAFA Secretary, I decided to ensure that the South African membership of the IAF was regularized. This coincided with the 2004 IAF Meeting in Abu Dhabi. Once again favoured by good fortune, I was able to attend this historic event and so came to meet people I considered to be icons in the falconry world and who have subsequently become firm friends. Attending the IAF Meeting was an incredible eye opener and I realized that this organization not only gave one the opportunity to meet falconers from every corner of the globe but also provided the channel to defend and promote the Art of Falconry. The opportunity to serve falconry and to progress my enjoyment of meeting and interacting with falconers from around the world was granted in 2006 when Frank Bond invited me to serve as Executive Secretary to the IAF.

South Africans tend to compare themselves poorly with the rest of the world. I discovered that, while South African falconry differed from the practices and customs of falconry in much of the rest of the world, we could hold our heads up with pride in the company of other falconers. I longed to give my compatriots exposure to the incredible people that I had met through the IAF as well as showing the achievements of South African falconers to the rest of the falconry world. The chance came when we were invited to host the IAF AGM in 2008. This was a wonderful experience for South African falconers and I had marvelous support from them to make this meeting a success.

Five years as Secretary have granted me a rich insight into the status of World Falconry with its challenges and virtues. I have been blessed with the opportunity to meet and befriend Falconers from every walk of life and every corner of the globe. Throughout this I have been supported by my wife who has met each new eccentricity with equanimity and who has never hindered me from hunting my hawk or sharing my time with other falconers and their affairs. Similarly, my medical practice has provided balance and perspective and I am indeed fortunate in the tolerance of my partners. I have come to realize that falconry is part of our heritage and that it is one of the special things that define who we are and make us human. 🦅

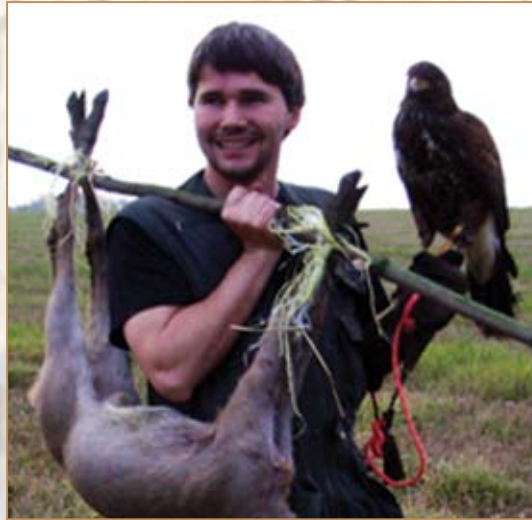
Adrian Lombard.



Photo by Mark Williams: www.markwilliamsphotographer.com

Falconry

AS SEEN BY BOHUMIL STRAKA, CANDIDATE FOR IAF PRESIDENT



Since I decided on my candidacy to be the next IAF President, I have been encouraged by various members of the falconry community to write a few considerations - not only concerning my general IAF visions, but also regarding falconry from my personal experience.

My personal background and views

A man often summarizes in the middle of his life - what he has done in the past and what he is going to do in the future and I am no exception. I am now 41 years old, perhaps midway in my lifespan assuming average European - simply not young and naive and not old and retired. Geographically, I also live in the middle (of Europe), born in Brno - capital of the historical region of Moravia in former Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic). Half of my life, over 20 years, I have been an active falconer and about half of this period (since 2000) I have actively represented my country in IAF. About half of this period (six years) I also served globally as IAF Advisory Committee member, and finally half of this period (three years) I served as IAF Vice President for Europe-Africa-Asia-Oceania.

Concerning my education, in fact I spent half my life studying at several universities in my city and also abroad (UK, Belgium). I spent half of my life under the communist regime, but as a young student, I had an opportunity with other students to help bring down the regime in our democratic “velvet revolution” in 1989. Of course, Communists, just like Nazis in 1939, threatened Czech students but they lost

the game with the result I was able to continue in my studies and gradually gained MSc. degree in microelectronics, Ph.D. degree in electro-technical science. Later, my motivation to defend falconry by my qualifications gave me will to study legal matters and I gained a university degree in law.

All these “halves” is indeed a random coincidence, but on the other hand, it gives me equalised experience and a genuine balanced perspective in how to view things before and after.

My life philosophy is: never allow your hobby to become a profession, otherwise you will lose your hobby. I see it clearly in electronics - it used to be my hobby since I was a 10 year old boy, it was my pleasure to invent and construct “new” things, to build my own guitar amplifiers, make my own radio receivers to listen at that time to illegal western radio broadcast. However, electronics ceased to be my pleasure and became my profession. Of course, occasionally even now electronics brings me some satisfaction or prestige, e.g. when I developed a high resolution digital camera with ultra-stable temperature regulators and laser drivers that are currently used at the International Space Station (ISS), but it is just my job. Another satisfaction through electronics was my participation in several falcon recovery wildlife projects as a radio-telemetry

expert. Since 2000, I am a self-employed subcontractor - a researcher and consultant for hardware and software, which gives me a certain freedom and time for my falconry, my family and other activities such as politics.

During the UNESCO inscription process, I clearly realised that such projects cannot be done without political support. Therefore in 2009, I became for the first time in my life active in politics. I entered the new conservative party, which is now our government party. I became a politician too late to support falconry towards the UNESCO inscription, but I had already an opportunity to provide political support to “Hunting” towards a very complicated inclusion in Czech national inventory list of cultural heritage following the know-how we gained during inclusion of Falconry. Thus, the Czech Republic became the first country in the world, where general hunting (considered by antis as a blood sport killing animals), is now officially recognised as a national cultural heritage. However, we are not finished yet, we will wait for other countries in the region to get Hunting on their inventories and then we will be eligible with Hunting to repeat the great success of the Falconry multinational UNESCO submission. Falconry is proven to have 1500 years history and Hunting 1000 year old tradition in our country, so both cultural elements certainly deserve this recognition, which is very useful. I clearly see that after UNESCO inscription, there are many benefits and

much more (positive) attention from public and media. Every month, newspapers, magazines, radio, TV and filmmakers call me for collaboration - for instance this June I participated in the falconry documentary film made by Czech national TV for teenagers and we also opened the first falconry museum in our country, which would hardly happen without the previous cultural recognition.

Falconry experiences of my life

I always liked birds of prey since childhood. However, I became seriously keen on falconry when I met falconers in the early 90's in the hectic time after democratic revolutions in Europe. I have and had many other hobbies such as travelling, canoeing, cycling, walking, dancing, playing and singing music, gardening, reading..., but I recognised soon that falconry is the hobby of my life and so I keenly decided to take the necessary special hunting and falconry apprenticeship and examinations which takes 1 year each according to Czech laws. Like most falconry apprentices in our country, I started with a small falcon - the common kestrel and later I progressed with a goshawk which used to be the most common bird in Czech falconry. The typical quarry in my country is hares for shortwing hawks and pheasant for falcons. However, I remember that my first quarry taken by my goshawk was not the traditional hare but a rook, mainly because this species is abundant around my

city. During my study in UK in 1993-1994, I saw for my first time Harris hawks and they became my favourite birds. This species was totally unknown in the Czech Republic and I had to wait a couple of years until the first Harris were bred in our country. Then I immediately purchased a large male (which was originally supposed to be a female). It was very attractive and exciting for me to explore this species, the only social one of all 300 raptor species and to pioneer Harris hawk falconry in our country. Beginning was difficult, because Harris require a different approach and know-how than goshawks, but gradually all myths that Harris can never take pheasant, hare, rook, duck, roe-deer etc., were destroyed.



Harrises proved to be excellent hare hawks (even single males) in Czech conditions, and soon following me, Harrises gained many followers. In parallel with my Harris I had also a female hybrid falcon, which I was trying for 5 years on hares - initially from the fist and later from waiting on. Frankly speaking, I had not much



I decided to take her to a small falconry meeting in the Czech-Moravian Highland. I remember it like today, when the kill of my life happened in the evening of Saturday 21st October 2006. It was only her fifth free flight and she saw a roe deer running down from the hill and she got it - bloody hell! While big 5kg

significant success with my hybrid, since hares in our region are quite big animals - in average 3.5 kg and sometimes 5kg compared to 1kg falcon, so she usually was not able to hold the hare for enough time until I could help her.

I have been encouraged by IAF Journal editor Tony Crosswell to describe some of my falconry experiences, so here it is. Everyone knows that big international meetings with hundreds of falconers are rather social than hunting events, quarry available for hundreds of falconers is usually limited, so it is natural that the best opportunities are reached on small local meetings or individually without any audience. Nevertheless, it was an enjoyable experience when, during large IAF meeting in Opocno castle in the Czech Republic in 2005, my male Harris took alone two big hares and he was evaluated as the best hawk in broad/shortwing category.

Two years later, surprisingly only two hares and a few partridges were taken by whole community of 100 falconers in three days during IAF meeting in Sezanne in France in 2007, so my female Harris easily became the most successful hawk of the meeting, since she took the bigger of both hares (some 4kg) at a very long 500m distance.

However, hare is not an extraordinary quarry. In September 2006, during my trip to UK, I received a nice present from my friend Dave Bowman - a juvenile female Harris. He is known to have excellent Harris hawk blood line originating from Dan Pike of USA. She was quite wild, so I used my favourite "medieval" method and decided not to sleep for two days and nights and to be with her 24 hours a day, so she became very tame and collaborative in the shortest time. After basic training and several domestic rabbit "kills" of natural colour,

hold a roe deer over one minute, medium size 1kg birds like goshawk or harris can hardly keep hold of a roe deer for 30 seconds. Luckily this roe deer was confused, it was running in the direction towards us, so I was close enough to catch it and help my bird. She was relatively high in condition (some 1050g) and I fed her a full crop from the neck of this 9kg roe-deer, so I expected that she would be overweight and out of condition for a few days. Next day, however she surprised me that she took in her sixth free flight another quarry - a big hare when her weight was 1120g. As juvenile inexperienced Harris, she took this hare by a different style, where she was not following the hare straight above ground, but she went up some 10m high and she caught the hare from a stoop. In later years she took tens of hares, but she never repeated this interesting stoop hare attack. My falconer friend, who lives in the same city, gave me this June a new juvenile female Harris and he said that this is for all my efforts I did in favour of UNESCO submission. The bird has the bloodline like my old Harris. So far, she seems to be a promising character, so maybe next time I will be able to add some more interesting experiences with crazy juvenile Harries...

My general visions for IAF and falconry

As I indicated, being a falconer over two decades, I have experienced falconry for about an equal time before and after year 2000, so I am in position to compare the old and new millennia. In my opinion year 2000 is not only an arithmetic symbol, but it was also a milestone, when the new religion - radical environmentalism gained power and started to endanger our ancient art - not only locally but also globally.

This brings many new challenges to the falconry community and IAF in particular.

Internal IAF affairs: I fully support the idea of the new IAF Business Plan as presented during the last IAF AGM in Al-Ain and I supported also IAF constitutional changes enabling it. IAF is growing every year, currently it has over 70 member organisations from 50 countries and it becomes difficult to run such a global organisation on a purely voluntary basis. Just like our partner organisations FACE and CIC, our target should be to have a small professional staff covering the routine daily business, but the democratically elected voluntary IAF officials must remain to be responsible for strategic, critical or sensitive matters as it is now. In the first step, at least a single administrative manpower (secretary) is desirable to unload IAF officers from administrative work saving valuable time of our experts for real specialised and dedicated tasks. Such changes will also require re-structure of working groups within IAF and to invite/encourage for participation a wider involvement of valuable experts, who are available in members organisations. The recently established Women's Working Group operates within IAF with so much enthusiasm that I will support its existence - not only because ladies make some 5-10% of world population of falconers. Because of strategic reasons, the IAF office should be in Brussels with the possibility to extend to the Middle East or elsewhere. Regarding membership, it is my aim to gain more valuable members to join IAF, especially Asian (more Russian clubs, China, Korea...), Arabians (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait...) and African countries.

Legal affairs: As a lawyer having experience with aspects of hunting, animal welfare, environmental and CITES laws, I am particularly interested and concerned with the legislative issues, the major threat for falconry in the future. UNESCO does provide falconry a good protection against a complete ban, but unfortunately it does not provide full protection against excessive overregulation and bureaucracy. IAF has to collaborate with partner organisations FACE and CIC to cope with many challenges: Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and CITES Conference in March 2013 - continue in efforts to promote peregrine and gyrfalcon downlisting and prevent saker uplisting; upcoming new EU animal welfare legislation - prevent restrictions on wild as well as captive bread animals; the new Invasive Alien Species (IAS) EU regulation proposal - prevent by all means from so called whitelisting of bird of prey and quarry species; revision of the annexes of Bird and Habitats EU directives - optimise in favour of falconers; Lead in ammunition - falconers need to be involved.

Media: I consider public opinion, which is formed through the media, to be very important. Therefore I will continue to encourage others to create an ongoing positive image of falconry via TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and of

course internet. While the majority of mass media is local and country specific, the internet is global. Therefore, I work myself continuously to improve our new website www.iaf.org replacing old domain www.i-a-f.org, because the internet is indeed a very effective and cheap media portal. Time was when our minor hobby was respected because it was interesting, but this is definitely gone. Nowadays, we need to present the media, public and authorities with the idea that falconry has some added value for society. Although I never used birds for profit myself, I respect that some falconers earn their living from falconry - if they do their professional jobs properly at airports, public displays, wildlife project, breeding facilities, pest elimination, it can bring a positive public image for falconry.

Science and conservation: According to my own experience, scientific and conservation activity of falconers is the best argument against anti-falconry groups within the context of sustainable use of wildlife. IAF and its scientific experts already do much in this sense together with numerous local people of IAF member organisations. However, if our budget allows, IAF should cooperate in more scientific conferences/seminars/workshops/forums with falconry and raptor topics to build more credibility within the scientific community as a serious conservation organisation. Another task will be to get IAF more involved in international and national conservation programs.

Culture: It was my pleasure to participate at national as well as international levels in all stages of the UNESCO project - from the first draft to the final success. In fact, it was the biggest honour in my life so far to act as the representative of the global falconry community during the UNESCO conference in Nairobi on November 16th 2010 and to experience the historic inscription of Falconry in the representative list of UNESCO intangible cultural heritage. In November 2012, it is expected that the original submission of 11 countries, which is the largest multinational file in UNESCO history, will be further extended for Austria and Hungary. Since IAF is accredited as UNESCO advisory organization, and I personally gained all necessary knowledge and experience, my vision is that we have to support and encourage even more interested countries to join the multinational UNESCO file.

Final message

I am not going to make cheap promises to create a paradise for falconers, I can only promise that personally I will never betray falconers and never sell our hobby and art to anti-falconers and together with all of you I will do my best on behalf of IAF to defend and promote falconry worldwide. If I am elected, my main effort will be focused to maintain continuity and enhancement of IAF as the global voice of falconry, which preserves our traditional hunting art not only for us, but also for future generations. 🦅



IAF PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE 2012

Frank M. Bond

In November, the IAF will have its 44th Annual General Meeting in Kearney, Nebraska, USA, so kindly hosted by the North American Falconers' Association. It was in Kearney where I began my journey as your President in 2006. This followed eight prior years in the leadership of the IAF, including six years as Vice President for the Americas. In those 14 years you have given me the opportunity to see the growth of world falconry organized under the leadership of the IAF, international recognition of falconry by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, the forging of very strong relationships with the larger organized international hunting community, and to see the IAF grow and prosper.

During the last six years, the IAF has grown by 50% from approximately 50 member organizations to 75 from 50 nations today. And in Kearney the number of member organizations applying for membership may approach 80. The applications for membership undeniably tell us that the new member organizations want to be associated with the IAF and they recognize that the IAF is the representative body for world falconry. That alone is a great honor, but it also presents us with some great challenges.

In 2010 the Slovak Falconers' Club hosted the IAF in October to a wonderful AGM where we saw some of the best falconry in Europe. The organization and camaraderie were at the very highest level. You will read a fine report of this AGM. But later, on November 16, 2010 I will never forget when our Vice President, Bohumil Straka, called me on his mobile phone from Nairobi, Kenya to announce that the UNESCO Conference of the Parties had just voted to recognize falconry as an intangible cultural heritage. It was the culmination of so much effort by so many people, almost



all of who were acknowledged last year in the 2011 Journal of International Falconry. However, we shall never forget the incredible support of the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage and the Emirates Falconers' Club to the world falconry community to secure this result.

The celebrations began, small and large, in so many places in the world. The largest, as many of you remember, was held in Al Ain, Emirate of Abu Dhabi, in December 2011 when we were so very generously hosted to the Second International Festival of Falconry. It was an opportunity to acknowledge and recognize the visionary presence of the late H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, may God rest his

soul, when he set us all on the path to point us toward a goal for something like the UNESCO recognition at the First International Festival of Falconry in 1978. And with grand patronage, his sons, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, and HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed, hosted the falconers of the world. For all it was the experience of a lifetime.

As I convened the meeting of the IAF Council of Delegates, I looked down the long tables at the faces of falconry from approximately 70 nations. The expectation was high because this was the largest annual general meeting in the history of the IAF. H.E. Majid al Mansouri, a valuable member of the IAF Advisory Committee, gave a wonderful introductory speech acknowledging the magnificent support of the Emirates Falconers' Club for the AGM and what it meant to have the AGM during the Al Ain festival. Our friend, Majid, always is such a great host. The next morning Dr. Awad Ali Saleh gave everyone a glimpse of the fundamental role of the ADACH in the UNESCO recognition efforts. It was a

view that most delegates around the world had never seen or understood. Awad has been tireless on our behalf and deserves our deepest gratitude. And to close out the final part of the meeting, one of the best-known falconry figures in the world, H.E. Mohamed al Bowardi, gave us a final address. It was presented on the large screen in Arabic and English as he made his presentation in Arabic. Like others he spoke of the UNESCO recognition saga, the importance of falconers in conservation, and finally the leading role that the IAF plays representing the falconers of the world. His remarks were preceded by a wonderful video of the First International Festival of Falconry, including much footage of Sheikh Zayed and some of the people attending this Second Festival. Then Mohamed graciously went around into the center of the very long delegates' tables to shake the hand and have a photo taken of the more than 100 people in the room. He spoke with everyone there to get to know each one a bit. He follows in the tradition of the late Sheikh Zayed who greeted all with his infectious smile and charismatic presence. I was pleased to give all of our hosts a small gift of a special platter with

the IAF logo recognizing the UNESCO recognition there in Al Ain.

We were joined by invited guests, including notably, Angus Middleton, CEO of FACE, the European hunters' organization which represents 7 million hunters. FACE has become a very important ally at all levels in Europe.

The Council of Delegates conducted a great deal of business over the two days. In 2010, I had presented the proposed IAF Business Plan, and I presented it again at this AGM. For some who had not seen it before, they were able to ask questions about it and to understand the importance of it for the organization. The Council adopted the Business Plan unanimously as the guide for the future of the IAF. On the second day, I made a presentation of suggested amendments to the IAF Constitution to conform to an implementation of the Business Plan if we successfully fund all components. With significant discussion leading to some changes, the amendments were adopted unanimously. We adjourned then perhaps the most significant AGM since the founding meeting four and one-half decades ago.



His Excellency Mohammed al Bowadi with Frank Bond at the 2011 IAF AGM.



In November 2011, Janusz Sielicki of Poland, an AC member, represented us very successfully at the Convention on Migratory Species' Conference of the Parties in Bergen, Norway. One of the principal issues was the consideration of the saker throughout its range. In conjunction with FACE and CIC, we joined in the formulation of general policy on sustainable use, and while the saker was up-listed, we successfully inserted language that there may be a limited harvest based on the development of strong conservation plan. And Janusz successfully convinced the delegates to support the sustainable harvest in the Mongolian conservation plan underwritten by the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi. In the up-listing proposal for the saker, one of the principal reasons stated for the decline was falconry. When Janusz demonstrated that there was no empirical evidence for such a broad generalization, the delegates dropped that unwarranted reason. Finally, I wrote all 130 delegates a personal letter on IAF stationery to make clear our position. Many of the delegates responded favorably. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the fabulous representation of Janusz. This is where the IAF finds its deepest connection between conservation and falconry.

So far this year we have lost a dear friend, leader and supporter of the IAF in Dr. Timothy Kimmel. He passed away unexpectedly. He had served on the AC, served as chairman for the Science and Conservation Working Group, and for the recent falconry festivals, he prepared the presentation of the falconer-conservationist exhibits. Prior to his service to the IAF, he was a two-term president of NAFA and it was during his presidency that NAFA joined the IAF. He was an avid game hawk and breeder.

So far this year, I have traveled to the Netherlands in March to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Jacoba van Bieren Falconry Club. I spoke to a very large gathering of local falconers where the Club members, principally Harrie and Ria Wagenaar and Adrian Koster pulled together a fantastic museum style exhibit. In June, I visited Brussels with Janusz Sielicki to attend an introductory meeting for European NGOs to express positions on the upcoming CITES Conference of the Parties; the IAF is pulling together proposals to down list the gyrfalcon and peregrine falcon from the CITES Appendix I list to Appendix II. Following that, I was hosted by Klaus and Elisabeth Leix and by Karl-Heinz and Monika Gersmann for small parties at their homes. Tom Richter and Susanna Hartmann attended the Leix's gathering. In October, I hope to attend the opening of the UNESCO recognition falconry art exhibition at the famous Rijks Museum in Amsterdam. Then I will travel onto the Czech Falconers' Club's annual field meeting in Opocno. And the following week I will be

near Dusseldorf, Germany for the DFO field meeting. It will be the first time I have had an opportunity to attend a DFO meeting. Then in early November I will return to Brussels for a special presentation of falconry in the EU Parliament hosted by MEP from France Madame Veronique Mathieu. There will be a formal reception, which will include a large exhibit on falconry being mounted by IAF Public Relations Officer, Gary Timbrell, Women's Working Group member, Veronique Blontrock. FACE has given us special assistance and coordination for this event. Then in later November, I will see many of you in Kearney for my final AGM as President. This will be a major year of transition for the IAF, as a new president will be elected. We are blessed to have very high quality candidates, both proven leaders in the IAF, and who are motivated to lead the falconers of the world. Dr. Adrian Lombard of South Africa and Dr. Bohumil Straka of the Czech Republic have the wonderful capacity to lead as falconry representation becomes more complex and challenging. They have my backing and will have my support in their efforts to lead this great organization, no matter who prevails. I will be pleased to work for the IAF in a limited role, as the new president may choose.

The IAF has had it challenges this year, which I will report in Kearney. But it would not have been possible to lead without the incredible support of Vice Presidents Ralph Rogers and Bohumil Straka, Executive Secretary Adrian Lombard, Treasurer Antonio Carapuco, Advisory Committee Chairman Alex Prinz, Journal Editor Tony Crosswell, Public Relations Officer Gary Timbrell, and Public Information Officer Jevgeni Shergalin, the members of the Advisory Committee and the Council Delegates. Together you are a formidable team. I count all of you as dear friends and colleagues. You have my deepest gratitude.

Every year I take a special moment to thank Tony Crosswell and his daughter, Tanya Betts, for their special work to put together the beautiful face of the IAF to the world, the *Journal of International Falconry*. This year's Journal, the last during my presidency, is no exception. They are special friends of the IAF.

In this my final year, despite the many challenges that an IAF President faces any year, and this year was no exception, it has been my pleasure to be your president. Thank you for permitting me this opportunity to serve the IAF and all of the falconers of the world. 🦅

Frank M. Bond
Santa Fe, New Mexico
July 2012

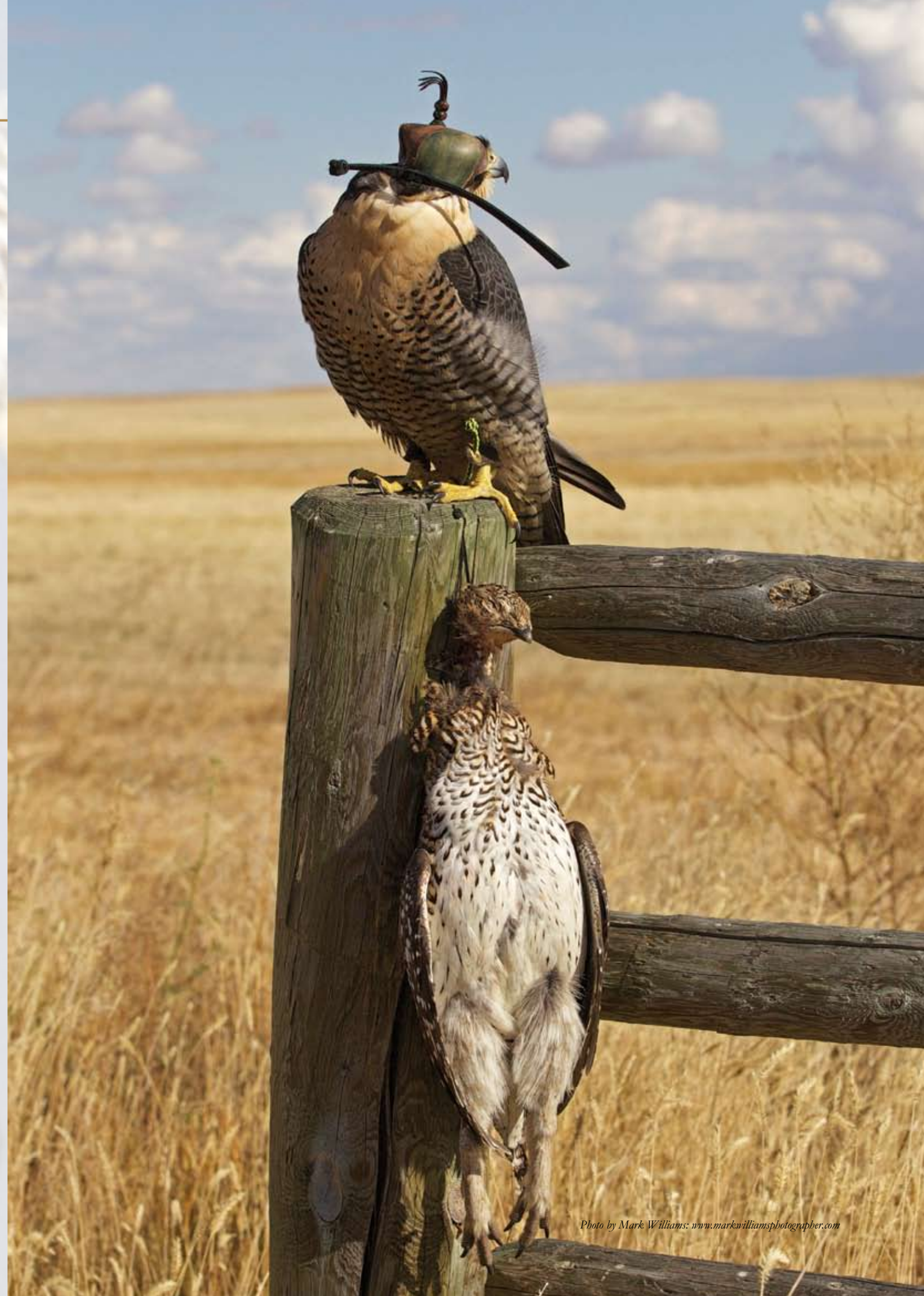


Photo by Mark Williams: www.markwilliamsphotographer.com

THE IAF TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF ELECTROCUTION OF FALCONRY BIRDS

By Adrian Lombard

Falconers can imagine little worse than the electrocution of their hunting bird. Nonetheless, many of us have had the dreadful experience of going into the Field with a fit, alert hawk that is ready to hunt and returning with our falconry partner reduced to an inert bundle of feathers through the inadvertent contact with live electric wires. It is a heart-breaking incident and all the worse because it is completely preventable.



Of course, it is not only Falconry birds that are killed in this way. Every year thousands if not millions of birds, many of them raptors and many representing endangered species are killed, all over the world, because of poorly constructed electricity supply structures. Indeed, it is quite probable that electrocutions are a very significant factor in the decline in Saker falcon population numbers. There is no doubt that the culprit structures can be built correctly or modified to avoid this senseless slaughter.

There are a number of countries around the world where



Pale Chanting Goshawk.

this problem is being addressed effectively. One of these countries is South Africa where the Electricity supply utility (ESCOM) has formed a partnership with one of the largest conservation N.G.O.s in the country, The Endangered Wildlife Trust, to address this issue and to mitigate culprit structures. There is an enthusiasm to assist falconers and provide advice on mitigation in response to electrocution incidents. Other experts and potential partners in this endeavor exist around the world and these individuals and organizations can also be encouraged to assist.

This issue was considered at the IAF AGM held in Al Ain in December 2012 and the Council of Delegates provided the IAF leadership with a mandate to address this issue. A plan is now ready for implementation to start our fight against the scourge of electrocutions. It has been decided to establish a **Database of Electrocutions**. The database will be managed, on behalf of the IAF, by a small group of Falconers belonging to the South African falconry Association who have formed an Action Group using the acronym – REST (Raptor Electrocution and Strike of Transmission-lines). Falconers are encouraged to report the electrocution of any Falconry birds and the electrocution of wild raptors can also be reported. The following process should be followed in the event of an electrocution event:



White-backed Vulture.

- Send an email to lombard@iaf.org (This email address will be updated and all delegates notified in due course) with any basic information ideally including a cell-phone photo of the

structure

- A representative of the Action Group will respond to obtain other information needed from the reporting Falconer or Falconry organization.
- Once the information has been processed and included in the data base, advice regarding mitigation of the causative structure will be sent to the Falconer or Falconry organization who reported the incident.
- If the IAF Member organization reporting the incident wishes, a letter to the National Authorities can be prepared by the IAF reporting the incident and requesting the implementation of mitigation.

This process will put the power to address electrocution incidents into the hands of Falconers on the ground. In this way, the IAF and its membership can address a problem facing Falconry birds and also assist with a significant international conservation issue. 🦅



FALCONRY IN SLOVAKIA

Falconry has been an integral part of the Slovak tradition since as long back as the ninth century. In this feature we have a series of fascinating articles which look both at the early history of falconry in Slovakia and falconry in the modern day.

SLOVAK HISTORY OF FALCONRY TRADITIONS

By Laco Molnar DVM ,PhD
IAF delegate, Slovak Falconers Club

Beside the traditions and habits left for a new generation by our ancestral falconers they also passed on a message:

*We do not hunt only for the prey...
but for that beauty during the hunt*

The present region of Slovakia ,was inhabited by the ancient Slavic nations. Between the 1-5 century the countryside went through a big change caused by deforestation and drying out the marshlands. This created large patches of steppe land suitable for migratory birds as a temporary stop on their migrations. The large amount of birds and demand for meat encouraged and introduced falconry as an effective hunting style. The cultural relation with eastern nations who entered Europe in the second century helped a lot with introduction of falconry into the Karpatian region.

During the era of Great Moravia (ninth century) - the first common state of the former Czechs and Slovaks - falconry was already accepted as a prestigious activity of royalty and contributed to its increased standard as very effective way to introduce game meat to daily cuisine.

The golden age of falconry during the period of the 11-15th century reworded Slovak falconry with great attention. The mountain region supplied falcons and falconers for other European castles and royal families. As mentioned in a written note from 1504 "The saker falcon from Nitra region is faster than a northern wind and claims higher rank than other falcons."

The introduction of firearms in the 18th century negatively affected falconry in Slovakia as well. Falconry was a sport and passion of the former royalty, and after the French revolution it was forbidden by law. There are only a few sporadic notes and

reports about falconers until the first World War.

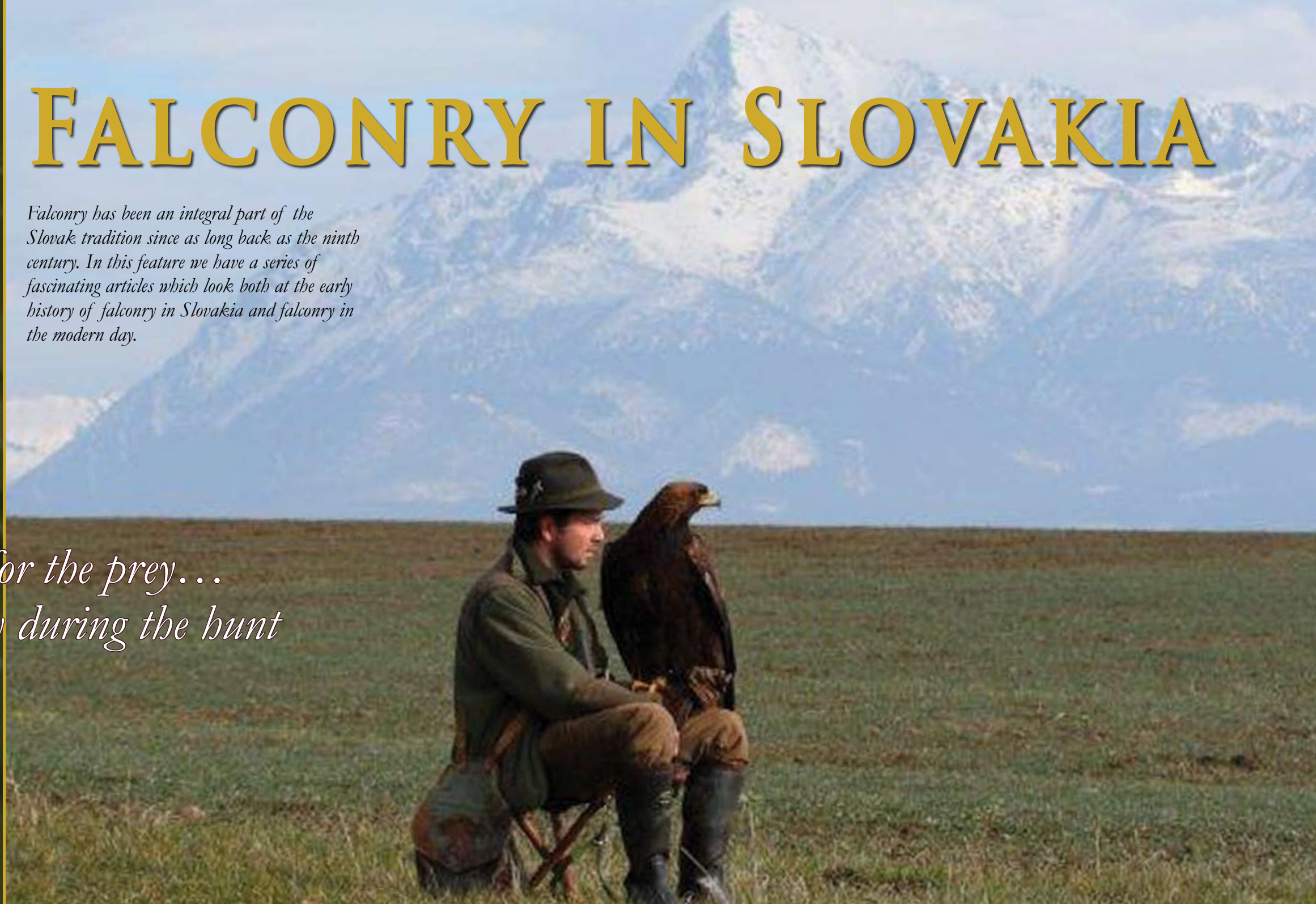
Renaissance of Falconry in Slovakia.

The first enthusiasts got organized and held the first falconry meet in 1965. Falconers Marosi and Doubrava presented themselves with exceptional birds. On 19th January 1967 falconry was accepted as a recognized hunting method and falconers united themselves in the first common Czechoslovakian Falconers Club. 1971 was the year when the Federative Falconers Club got divided

into two national Organizations: The Slovak and Czech Falconers Clubs working under the larger umbrella of the National Hunting association. In 2007 we celebrated our 40th anniversary and together with the Czech Club presented our common history at Engelfield festival in the UK. At the moment the club is uniting over 250 active members and almost 50 candidates.

Among the greatest achievements of the Club we can count the continuity and sustainable work with the young generation , which is provided by two forestry high schools where falconry is a part of the curriculum

and is lectured as an accredited subject. The subject of falconry is incorporated also into the curriculum of university education in Faculty of Forestry in Zvolen. This is a public institution supported by government and all students will get familiar with knowledge about birds of prey, training ,hunting , legislation and history of falconry. Besides this the Club organizes training courses for new candidates willing to become a club members. They have to pass a one year training supervised by a senior master, and successfully pass the exam.





The annual series of fox and roe deer hunts is the most famous event in Slovakian falconry.

The Slovak Falconers Club also makes large efforts towards the national regulatory bodies (parliament and ministry) to reduce one sided pressure from the radical green movements .Thanks to our club president we were able to incorporate such a positive formulation into the valid legislation which made the falconry and hawk keeping easier and hunting with birds has become a recognized legal style - with an accepted exemption specially for falconers within the legislation regulating hunting. This is a huge relief after many years of suffering due to extremely strict regulation –much harder for falconers than anywhere else in Europe.

The main falconry events are usually the international falconry meets in Opočno –getting known during the time of former Czecho-Slovakia. Nowadays the Slovak Falconers Club organizes also its annual meet in DIAKOVCE. A fertile land close to Danube rivers, abundant in small game it gives a wonderful opportunity to present falconry in all its beauty. Regular visitors, politicians, government ministers and also public people sympathetic with falconry annually find a great joy .

The most famous event is the annual series of fox and roe deer hunts in the northern part of the country, the mountain scenery during a few days hunting event challenges the fitness of the hunting birds as well as the falconers.

The club members fought a long battle against discriminating legislation, many legal cases and disputes were on the daily agenda of the club meetings. Extremely strict procedures regulating captive birds of prey, their breeding and international traveling meant that it stayed a passion for only the most determined falconers. But our resistance proved our rights and in 2008 we started a first season with falconry-friendly regulations accepted by our parliament. We achieved the sustainability and reputation for the falconers and for their passion. After many years fighting for our constitutional rights ,we believe that acceptance by UNESCO gives legal guarantees and helps shield falconry from radical effects and negative influences if a change in political orientation occurs. We offer full support and our active contribution and cooperation with the international falconry community. 🦅

WITH EAGLES IN SLOVAKIA

By Gary Timbrell



Some of the 16 eagles lined up for the day's hunting.

Having been a part of IAF since my first term as delegate in 2000, I was delighted and honoured to represent IHC once again at an AGM. This, its 41st, was held in the Hunting Castle of Palarikovo in Slovakia on 21st and 22nd October, 2010. Advisory Committee Meetings were held at the Slovakian Falconers' Eagle Meet in Vrbod on the two days prior to the AGM. Since I take an active role as PRO for IAF I was obliged to attend the AC meetings as well as the AGM itself. Vrbod is a six hour drive from Vienna airport (five from Bratislava) and nestles under the High Tatras mountain range which continues unbroken into the Transylvanian Carpathians. This is the wildest country I have ever seen. It is completely different to the neat Czech countryside many IHC members know from international meets in Opočno. Small villages are scattered on the rolling country between the mountains. Each house has a vegetable plot and poultry yard and at the edge of each settlement there is a gypsy encampment, an unromantic one with a standpipe, no electricity, mud and barefoot children. It is not an affluent area. There are strings of garlic around all the doors and

windows. The weather is grey; the mountains attract drizzle and mists. There are ruined castles. It's like an old black and white Hollywood film set.

I only managed to see one day's hunting. At the meet there was the usual line up of the eagles (16) and formal speeches from the club chairman and one from the president of the local hunters association.

“The reason there are only eagles here is that there is no small game and the reason there is no small game is there are too many foxes and lynx. These have cleaned out the hares, the rabbits, the pheasants and the partridge. Oh, and don't go too far into the woods for a pee, there are wolves there and the bear population in this area is very high this year so we have fewer deer.”

I did not go into the woods.

Those of us lucky enough to have visited central Europe have seen the high calibre of the Czech and the Slovak eagle hunters and even the Czechs acknowledge the supremacy of the Slovaks in this. Their eagles are calm, show no aggression on the fist and even no aggression when accidentally slipped

THE EAGLE HUNTERS OF SLOVAKIA.

By Adrian Lombard



A successful day at the Slovakian Falconers Eagle Meet.

in an impromptu cast. In discussions with our main guide, Laslo, two reasons came out for this, constant attention to the extent of almost living with one's eagle and catching something almost every day, at least five days in the week. Note: remember when we did this with sparrowhawks? We used to be good, too. They carry their eagles mostly hooded, but remove the hoods from time to time, for example if you admire their bird. This seems to help keep them constantly manned and avoids lethargy. There was a professional team of beaters provided by the hunting association and paid for by the spectators in our fees. We were left fairly free to stand where we wanted during a beat so long as we stayed clear of the falconers who assessed the best slips and took up positions on the higher knolls. We stood in small groups – silent unless we wanted abuse in four languages – while the beat came towards us coming through rough patches in the open fields and sending foxes and roe-deer towards the waiting eagles.

Despite the large predators we saw many, many roe deer, often coming towards us in family groups of three, two parents with their calf of the year, now almost indistinguishable from

its mother. As a rule the eagles were slipped individually and they selected one of the deer, usually avoiding the large males with their antlers. There were as many foxes as roe deer and these provided more interesting slips. With the deer it was a straight speed chase with a final attempt for height, a strike and hold-on-tight while the falconer runs like the wind to assist. With the foxes it became more of a course with the fox jinking left and right and the eagle having to throw-up and wing-over. Neither quarry is a walkover. Many roe were refused at the last second and some escaped.

The most spectacular flight I saw was on a wily fox that turned his head and snarled every time the eagle came in for the strike. Three times the eagle threw up, but the third time put in a little jink herself causing the fox to turn his head and snap the wrong side. The eagle hit him hard, one foot across his head, the other across his back, pinning him to the ground. This won a justified round of applause from the field. Four deer and four foxes were taken on every day of the three day meet, an impressive total of 24 head of quarry. The deer were eaten at the banquet after the AGM, but not the foxes. 🦊

The 2010 IAF AGM was held in Slovakia. I attended this and had the pleasure of being hosted by the Slovak Falconry Club and meeting up with old friends – Laco Molnar and Lubomir Engler – who had attended the IAF Meeting hosted by SAFA in 2008. The initial part of the Meeting, involving the IAF Advisory Committee Meeting, was held in Kezmarok-Vrbov, in the foothills of the High Tetas Mountains. I must admit some trepidation in setting off, via Vienna, for a place whose name I still cannot pronounce or spell! Nevertheless, set off I did, accompanied by my long-suffering spouse – who had been conned into believing we were going to an Italian seaside resort (well Venice and Vienna do sound similar) and who remains under the impression that somewhere our trip went irrevocably and dreadfully wrong! I admit that I would not have made the Meeting if we had not been met in Bratislava by Laco who took us on an amazing drive across Slovakia past lakes and forests decked out in autumn colors. The trip was interspersed by Medieval Castles perched on the most improbable kopjes and rumored to have been occupied by the villainous Counts and Countesses who bathed in human blood before breakfast. We settled into the hot spring resort hotel on the outskirts of Vrbov. The company and camaraderie made

up for any short-comings as well as the fact that the hotel grounds were littered with an array of Eagles and fairly rugged looking falconers including some from as far afield as Holland and Germany. The Eagle hunting Meet in Slovakia is recognized as the World's finest and this was attested



Scenes from the Eagle hunt



to by Bakyt Karnakbayev of Kazakhstan who was truly impressed by the events of the next three days. The birds were all Golden Eagles; several were the large central Asiatic “Berkut” subspecies. These are spectacular birds, huge and dark chocolate brown with golden highlights. Several were imprints but there was no sign of aggression towards their handlers. One of the Falconers told me that it is important that the birds are hunted frequently and kill regularly to focus the aggression. They were all in outstanding condition.

We spent 3 days going out to hunt. Hunting grounds were organized with the local hunting clubs. The target quarry was Roe deer and Red Fox although young Boar could be flown if seen. The Falconers were welcome to take the Roe Deer, at €100 a head, as the Roe Deer numbers need to be controlled to increase the numbers of Red Deer. Red Fox were seen as vermin and could be hunted for free. Understandably, some of the falconers wanted to avoid too many roe deer and hoped for foxes. The method of hunting involved identifying a suitable valley with a river system containing reeds and bushes in its floor and surrounded by agricultural lands. The Eagle Falconers would position themselves, seated strategically on the slopes of the valley around the marsh. A very energetic and hard working group of beaters then made their way through the valley, singing and clapping their hands, intermittently a roe deer or fox would break cover and the eagle closest was allowed to fly it. The deer would run, twisting and jinking, while the eagle tried to get a foot to them. Ideally, a foot to the back and one to the head would bring the deer down, thrashing and kicking, and the falconer must run in subdue it. The fox would run and the eagle would throw up and try to stoop onto them. The fox may then stop and try to bite at the eagle as it came in. Once again the falconer needed

to get in quickly before injury was done.

All the action took place in beautiful surroundings. The rolling hillsides of the foothills of the High Tetras Mountains were covered with agricultural lands and patches of woodland in autumnal colors. Little villages were dotted around and were characterized by the wooden Churches with onion shaped steeples. The houses were painted in a variety of bright colors, pinks, yellows and greens. I was told that during the communist era, houses were not painted in different colors and tended to be drab and uniform. Certainly much is changing since the establishment of a democracy. Historic villages are being renovated, highways built and signs of development are everywhere.

On one of the days, we hunted the slopes of a large hill which was topped by the ruins of an enormous medieval castle. It was the most dramatic setting for a hunt but I could not help thinking how fortunate I am, never to have been asked to assault those stone walls, struggling up the steep hillside while the inmates poured stones, arrows and boiling oil at my head. It must have made a strange picture as I, a South African stood on a boulder beneath those walls with two Arabic falconers while the autumn wind tried to freeze our butts off.

This was a wonderful experience and I have been extremely fortunate to share the hawking with these skilled and talented Eagle hunters. They were wonderful hosts and we were welcomed into their culture and homeland. The Eagle hunting was unique and dramatic; these Central European hunters have proved themselves Masters of the Art.

Something was salvaged of my marriage on the way home with a stop-over in Istanbul and the purchase of a very expensive leather coat! 🦅

IAF AGM 2011, FALCONRY FESTIVAL AND UNESCO

Marking celebration for UNESCO recognition of falconry as an intangible cultural heritage during the Falconry Festival and at the conclusion of 2011 IAF AGM in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates His Excellency Mohammed al Bowadi eloquently addressed delegates.

PHOTOS BY MARK WILLIAMS WWW.MARKWILLIAMSPHOTOGRAPHER.COM

“Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Al Saalam Alaykum

I am both proud and delighted to see falconers from all over the world together with delegates from UNESCO under one roof, sharing a common passion, as falconry is a force for world peace, cross- cultural understanding and for building generations truly committed to preserving and conserving nature.

So many people here and from throughout the world merit recognition and deserve our deep respect for the successful international efforts that contribute to the protection of human heritage and provide the bases for cooperation between different peoples and civilizations, as part of a strategy to maintain the inherent culture in the Arab and international heritage. The file submitted to the UNESCO is shared by 11 countries in addition to the UAE, that took the responsibility for coordinating efforts and compiling documents as confirmed by the committee of experts of UNESCO to become the best international file submitted so far.

Here we give special recognition to the real visionary, the late president of the UAE, H.H. Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, ahead of his time and thinking of the future of falconry he organized, in Abu Dhabi in 1976, the first International conference for the preservation and conservation of falconry. Now his visionary legacy is in hand due to the continuous support of H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of UAE, and the commitment and directions of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince,

Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Ladies and gentlemen

The UAE has begun its interest in saving falconry as a human heritage very early and has taken a number of actions to achieve its objectives:

- Creation of hatching centres for raising falcons in captivity to limit relying on wild falcons. So far four centres are in existence.

- With the intention of dramatically reducing the illegal trade in falcons, a passport system has been launched in the UAE. The system is linked with a falcon registration process that was put into place in late 2002 with the help of WWF UAE and the CITES Secretariat. Only birds that are legally obtained and carry necessary permits, especially CITES permits, can be registered for passports in government facilities.

- The Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Project is responsible for returning 1297 falcons to the wild at the end of the annual hunting seasons. The project was initiated as a result of Sheikh Zayed's desire that the falcons he used for hunting every year should not become completely domesticated, but should continue to live in their natural state. This project also provides scientists with data regarding migratory patterns.

- In recent years the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital (ADFH) has emerged as one of the most reputed falcon hospital in the Gulf region and is now considered the largest falcon hospital in the world and a leading center for falcon medicine. The ADFH recorded an increase of 18% in the number of patients visits with over 5222 falcons being attended to in



2010.

- Another important area of research where Abu Dhabi is supporting is the genetic studies on the falcon. We are analysing the genome of the calidus Peregrine, and of the Saker Falcon (which is genetically very similar to the Gyr). This is through IWC, Cardiff University and the Beijing Genetics Institute. The Falcon Genome Project will help to decipher genetic relationships between wild populations and it will help determine genetic influences in disease. In addition it will help managing the captive populations of falcons long-term.

- In 2010, 5000 artificial nests for Saker Falcons were erected in Mongolia, in addition to 250 nests that had been part of a five-year experimental study. These artificial nests provide new nesting sites for Sakers in areas of central Mongolia where few natural nesting sites exist. In 2011 there were

200 breeding Saker Falcons in these artificial nests and over 600 chicks produced at these nests were implanted with microchips. This initiative has been endorsed by CITES and work in Mongolia is continuing to ensure that the trade in Saker Falcons is sustainable and has conservation benefits for the species.

I take this opportunity to congratulate IAF for being accredited status of UNESCO International Advisory NGO.

I would like to stress that the successful submission recognized by UNESCO is a landmark in falconry's history, and the UNESCO convention too. Now the real work starts. Each country has to develop an action plan to safeguard falconry for the future and to sustain a living heritage.

I hope you have enjoyed your stay in the UAE and I wish you a safe journey home.

Thank you all.” 🦅



The International Festival of Falconry *Al-Ain 2011*

“The most multicultural event in the history of falconry”

The International Festival of Falconry was the biggest, the most expensive and the most multicultural event the world of falconry has ever seen. Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the president of the United Arab Emirates and Emir of Abu Dhabi, and HH Lieutenant General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

Words and photos by Bohumil Straka, IAF vice-president



The festival took place from 10th to 18th December 2011 in the historic oasis of Al-Ain in the UAE. The festival also hosted the biggest scientific falconry conference that brought together speakers from all over the world, delivering professional lectures on an immense diversity of falconry-related subjects, from falconry politics around the globe to the Falco genome sequence, from conservation of quarry through sustainable use to falconry education. With 93 experts from the whole world there was also a UNESCO workshop to help those working towards the nomination extension. In parallel with the festival, the International Association for Falconry (IAF), with unprecedented 130 delegates from 58 countries, held its Annual General Meeting in the same place. The Festival aimed at celebrating the inscription of falconry on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. According to the reactions of the excited falconers this event trumped everything they have seen and experienced so far. This event followed the example of the first International Festival of Falconry, organised in 1976, which was inaugurated by the late Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan, genuine falconer and environmentalist, and the two international festivals in Great Britain held in 2007 and 2009.

Abu Dhabi hosts were again particularly generous in organisation of the festival and can truly be proud of their hard work. Moreover, attracting the exceptional number of thousands of visitors from almost 80 countries was neither easy nor cheap. In total, the expenses allegedly rose to millions of USD. The sponsorship of the flight tickets and accommodation for more than 500 falconers itself must have cost over one million USD. The organisers chose up to five representatives from each country according to the size and significance of the falconry community. Furthermore, the art and photography competition in 28 categories gave the

chance to join the festival without any charge to additional 140 participants. Furthermore, many VIP guests from aristocratic and diplomatic circles, like princes, sheikhs, diplomats, state representatives, authorities and other distinguished persons, were also invited. Such a generosity could possibly be compared only to spectacular hunting events of medieval kings.

The sponsored visitors stayed in luxurious hotels in Al-Ain oasis, 2 hour bus drive from Abu Dhabi or Dubai. However, the participants, who stayed for free in tent village in the middle of the desert 50km far from the busy Al-Ain city, experienced the most romantic atmosphere. Moreover, the camping falconers were not bounded by the representative duties like the sponsored falconers.

From the romantics of a desert camp to grand parades in Al-Ain city

For the first five days the desert camp near Remah village became the centre of the festival. Falconry camel rides, one of the most attractive activities here, took place twice a day. This traditional way of hunting has not been practised for over 50 years, because the camels were replaced by off-road cars. Almost 350 falconers wanted to experience this unusual activity, but it was unfortunately available for 120 attendants only, so the final choice was randomly made by a computer.



Clockwise from top right: the falconry parade of over 80 nations; the festival venue - the historic fort of Jahili in an oasis at Al-Ain; some of the thousands of visitors at the grand parade.



Clockwise from top right: the parade of nations was admired by H.E. Prince Hamdan Al Nahyan (left) and H.E. Dr Bowardi (right); past president of UNESCO ICH Committee Dr Awadh Al Musabi accepts gifts; traditional Arabian goods in the festival tents.



Groups of ten guided by experienced falconers and trackers hunted traditional Arabian prey like houbara, bustard and desert hare. Surprisingly, only few people fell off their camel. Fortunately, although you sit higher off the ground while camel riding than while horse riding, falling to the soft sand is not as dangerous as it looks like. So, the camel riding was quite easy even for amateurs.

A very rich and interesting programme was arranged during the whole day for all participants. Everybody was amazed by the demonstrations of the eagle and falcon training using a radio-controlled model planes. Its biggest advantage is the possibility of changing the direction and the speed, unlike the balloon or kite. Thus, the flying condition of the falcons can easily be improved.

Different exciting moments happened on the nearby camel-saluki racing circle. The 20 fastest salukis raced in five rounds. The winner is the one, which as first catches the gazelle model moving in the middle of the two kilometres long race track. The owner of the best saluki drove home in a brand new Toyota 4x4.

Further, over 100 local falconers participated in a 400 meter track competition, where the falcons flew from the fist to a lure. The fastest falcon covered the distance in 16 seconds and the happy owner again won a valuable prize.

In the evening everybody was talking, eating, singing, dancing and enjoying themselves by evening camp fires. Although during the night the temperature in bedouin tents dropped under 10°C, thanks to the thick blankets, the falconers were not cold and some even spent the night on the sand under the stars. Spending the time in the camp was a truly unique experience no one will ever forget.

The main festival events of the last three days were moved to the Jahili fort in Al-Ain city. This historic city was freshly inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List in 2011. Delegates from more than 50 countries presented their country as well as national falconry heritage in interesting exhibition tents. Visitors were amazed to see traditional Arabic tents next to the North American tepees and Mongolian yurts.

Furthermore, visitors had an opportunity to enjoy the international market with a wide offer of falconry and oriental goods. Also, exciting demonstrations of falconry from all over the world, trained dogs and horses could have been seen in the arena.

Besides, an art and

photography competition, conferences and lectures were held.

The festival was ceremoniously closed with the Grand National Parade. It was really spectacular to see falconers of different ages and from different countries to come together as a community and to show that falconry is a genuine living human heritage.

A few more words about the host country

The United Arab Emirates have been considered as a country of superlatives for many years already. However, it would not be right to associate its success only with the oil richness. Although the UAE have the fifth biggest oil resources in the world, it does not mean anything yet. There are also other mineral rich countries, but in many cases, it does not have any positive influence neither on the advancement nor on the welfare of the inhabitants. On the contrary, for some countries the mineral richness is a curse and they are convulsed in civil wars.

The UAE is a federation of seven emirates, each governed by a hereditary emir, with a single national president. The largest emirate is Abu Dhabi, covering over 86% of the country's total area, and the second largest one is Dubai.

Today's advancement is by right attributed to the establisher of the UAE – H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan. When the emirates had gained the independence in 1971, sheikh Zayed became the first president and remained president after several re-elections until his death in 2004. During his governance he transformed the developing UAE into a highly developed country that can serve as an example for other Arab countries and at some points even to some European countries.

The health care and education level (including universities) is very high and without any charge. There are even specialised hospitals for animals, for falcons for example, that often have better equipment than human hospitals in some countries. Each UAE citizen who establishes a family gets a house and a sufficient financial amount for a start. However, only about 20% of the UAE's population are native citizens.

Sheikh Zayed relatively liberalised the UAE and gained a reputation as a wise and open-minded ruler, but some of the orthodox countries criticised him for that. The UAE can serve as an example that in some cases an enlightened absolutism with a ruler preferring the welfare of his country can be better than a marionette democracy or a military dictatorship.

Sheikh Zayed was so wise that he neither became an oil concern vassal nor unnecessarily spent millions, nor preferred a short term profit, but he invested in the infrastructure, education, health care, trade and financial institutions and tourism, not only at his home country, but also around the whole world.

Only 50 years ago, Abu Dhabi, now the capital city of the UAE, was a poor fisherman's town with 20,000 inhabitants and without any roads. The only bigger building was the emir's fort. Despite the fact that the 95% of the land is covered by an uninhabitable desert, thanks to a fast development in the whole Emirates also Abu Dhabi's population increased almost hundred times. Abu Dhabi reminds a lot of some American cities. Since it lies on an island, its panorama is similar to Manhattan.

Sheikh Zayed, however, did not invest to the cities development only, he also drew a big attention to keeping traditions and culture that were endangered by a fast modernisation. Sheikh Zayed was also the first modern environmentalist in the Arabic world, who supported the ideas of sustainable development and natural resource use. He promoted this approach long before today's environmentalists.

A place, where petrol is cheaper than water...

Looking at the prices of petrol, almost everybody from the rest of the world is shocked. In this country the motorists live like in a paradise. It is a big paradox though – while one litre of petrol costs less than one bottle of water in a supermarket. You might probably think that the country with a low consumption tax must go bankrupt, but the contrary is true. According to different statistics, the GDP per capita over 100,000 USD makes this country one of the richest in the world. For example in the USA, the GDP is twice smaller.

While other airlines are teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, the local state airlines became one of the most luxurious carriers in the world and they still keep buying new planes. The emirs are very popular between the native inhabitants. Since there are no demonstrations, we can expect that this absolute monarchy will smoothly get through the present Arab revolutions. We can also expect a further growth, because investors prefer safety and peace. Skyscrapers in new commercial districts of the capital city grow unbelievably fast.

The only inconvenience is a small amount of rainfall. Unfortunately, the lack of rainfall during recent decades changes vegetation in some areas into a desert. Despite this, visiting the countryside is still a very popular weekend activity (the weekend runs here from Friday to Saturday, Sunday is a working day). Children get to the nature and do not lose the awareness of the traditional way of life that pursues harmony with nature. In difficult terrains, camels – the ships of the desert – were replaced by off-road cars. The most common brand is Toyota for its reliability in rough conditions.

About the legendary Arab hospitality - “be my guest for three days...”

The Arab hospitality is unique. You don't believe it, unless you experience it. According to the holy Koran the accommodation and food should be offered to any guest for three days as a minimum. Of course, in the hotels it is not



because it is used for a personal hygiene. Therefore, you are not allowed to eat with left hand from a shared bowl.

The most important meal of the day is a dinner. For some nations it may seem to last too long until late at night. Sometimes curious situations happen, when you are in a hurry. You try not to meet other people in order to avoid the invitation. Time is relative in the Arab countries. People usually do not hurry anywhere and accuracy is not strict even in the business environment.

From the sociological point of view, it is interesting that the family, including a wider family, is far more united in the Arab society than in the rest of the world. It is usual that a richer family buys a block of houses, a street or a district and then the whole family tribe moves in. The advantage surely is the shared babysitting.

The current low crime rate in the stable Arab countries is also exceptional from a sociological perspective. A murder, burglary or robbery, are considered a big sin. Many Arabs do not even accept interest on money savings. Since this money does not come from any work, it is believed to be immoral. Therefore, this country seems to be a paradise not only for tourists and motorists, but also for banks.

A few words at the end...

“What will be next? “, ask the people. Nobody knows. The organisers admit there are going to be other smaller international festivals in the future, next maybe already in 2013. But the truth is that such this huge event could hardly be excelled by any other. Moreover, the organisation takes a lot of time and financial resources, which may be a problem with regard to the world economic situation. The festival can definitely be considered a big success, because it has been recognised not only by the falconry community, but also promoted in the media throughout the whole world. All organisers and participants deserve many thanks for such a fantastic falconry promotion.

Useful links for more info, photos and videos:

www.iaf.org

www.falconryfestival.com

www.youtube.com and www.google.com search for phrase: Falconry Festival UAE 2011



Falconry

as Intangible Heritage:

A Universe of Values

The falconers' community should constantly develop and foster the reflection on spiritual and intellectual values associated with their practice. At the moment of the official recognition of falconry as the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO the whole widespread community of falconers had good reason to celebrate.

Words and images by Prof Ewa Łukaszzyk

But the justified joy and satisfaction shouldn't cover the fact, voiced by Patrick Morel in the previous issue of the International Journal of Falconry in Autumn 2011, that this cultural practice continues to be strongly contested, especially on the European ground, where the dominating tendency is to ban all traditional hunting techniques, as happened in the case of hunting with hounds. For many people alien to the falconry community, there is no difference: if hunting with dogs was banned, why should hunting with birds remain? In the widespread consciousness, falconry is in exactly the same category of practices. Thus, in spite of the UNESCO recognition, in many countries the pressure on hawking is likely to continue. The survival of falconry depends on how persuasively the falconry community will be able to express itself, inscribing its own cultural practice into a larger universe of values shared by members of the diverse societies to which falconers belong, arguing the necessity for preserving this particular tradition in the context of safeguarding the cultural diversity of Humanity and showing in what ways falconry has contributed to enrich the patrimony of particular societies and of human kind as a whole. Of course, the necessity for counter weighting the arguments

of opponents is not the only reason to reflect on the deep meaning of falconry as Intangible Cultural Heritage. In the aftermath of the official, international recognition, this is the moment of rethinking the true meaning of the falconer's tradition as a universe of values and to foster the proper understanding of how and in what sense falconry is in fact a positive and meaningful legacy, worthy of being transferred to future generations. The legacy of falconry, seen as a lesson of history reshaped by our present endeavours and worthy of transfer to the future, encompasses such heterogeneous, but somehow interrelating elements as universalism, diplomatic management of conflicts, cognitive posture of man facing the world and relationship with transcendence, being a model of perfect love and even giving some hints for a gender perspective. The initiative of UNESCO, leading to the protection of the immaterial aspect of human heritage and recognizing its value at the highest institutional level, is based on the growing consciousness that not only monuments or artefacts preserved over time shape the cultural landscape of Man. Culture, evidently, means more than just this. Any material object, monument or exhibit item remains meaningless



A detail from the original manuscript of *De arte venandi cum avibus*, the falconry book by Frederic II, illustrated by anonymous miniaturist, 1240s.

without a living tradition into which it can be inscribed. It makes sense in the context of a tradition and to the bearers of a tradition that those who have inherited it from their ancestors feel deeply interested and concerned in transmitting it to their descendants. Living tradition builds and shapes a community into which a human being can inscribe itself and from which he or she can draw a sense of his or her individual existence, identifying with a larger universe of values, spreading over space and time. Falconry establishes such a community, vehicular of values that can be named, enumerated and persuasively argued. It is not merely a set of techniques destined to tame a bird of prey in order to use it in a hunting expedition or an efficient way to acquire meat. It might have been this at a very distant moment in the past, but it has become much more ever since. Perhaps it is not exaggerated to say that falconry is a state of mind. And if the falconers want to pass this heritage to the future generations, it's not an archaic technique of acquiring meat that they want to transfer, but this special attitude that became a consistent legacy, transmitted over centuries till it came into our hands. It constitutes an important gift for the future.

There is a paradox in falconry. It can be considered as a highly individualistic activity, and at the same time it is a vehicle of a subtle communitarian dimension. While falconry is no longer a mark of social distinction, it still remains an expression of the spirit of independence of those who set and demand the highest standards, both for themselves and for those to whom they bestow their friendship. On the other hand, falconry has a power of creating a community of its own kind. The links of closeness, relationship and friendship built over the falconer's



A French translation of the falconry book by Frederic II, elaborated in Flanders and illustrated by an anonymous master active in Bruges, 1482.



A miniature from the Codex Manesse, approx. 1330. A falconer portrait of another member of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, Conrad called the Boy (1252-1268), juvenile king of Sicily and Jerusalem.

passion often cross the frontiers and the habitual boundaries of social class, ethnicity, differences of credo or ideological persuasion. There is a surprising potential of universalism attached to this seemingly down-to-earth activity of training birds to hunt. It becomes obvious when we consider some historical examples.

As early as in 783, a manuscript of a work by Archigenes of Apamea on breeding and taming hawks was included as a part of the tribute offered by the Byzantine empress Irene to establish a truce with the Muslims. Already at this early stage of history, falconry seems to play an important role as a common point of interest, able to redirect the attention of both sides of the conflict towards a loftier sphere of human activity, bringing truce in war. Ever since, birds and all kind of falconry artefacts or literature have been widely used in the aftermath of conflicts as means of re-establishing, at least symbolically, the disturbed order. In different times and

places falcons, rather than gold or precious objects, have been offered and accepted as ransoms. Would it be an exaggeration to call them Birds of Peace?

Falconry and diplomacy went closely together all over the medieval history of Christian-Muslim conflicts and relationships. Independently of the military confrontations, the time of truce was filled both with hunting encounters and exchange of knowledge, artefacts and zoological species used in falconry. An interesting evidence of these close contacts, practised in the Holy Land dominated by the crusaders, is given by Usamah ibn Munqidh in his autobiography, *Kitab al-I'tibar (Book of learning by example)* studied and translated by Philip K. Hitti. This Muslim warrior and courtier living in the times of the Crusades (1095-1188) was the son of the educated emir of Shaizar, a miniature state in the vicinity of Aleppo. His life was filled by wars, travels and hunting. As a member of the social elite of that time, he used to maintain close relationships with important figures among both, Muslims and Christians. He was a friend of the great Salah ad-Din and of the king of Jerusalem, Fulk. If we believe Usamah's own words, he was bound by mutual ties of amity with numerous European knights. In his autobiographical book, falconry furnishes a constant background for those social relationships, crossing over an ideological gap that could seem impossible to traverse.

This is also how the most famous falconer figure of the Middle Ages, the Emperor Frederic II of Hohenstaufen, first discovered his life-long passion. The crucial moment in the history of European falconry was the 6th crusade (1228-29). This is when Frederic II, the Holy Roman Emperor, but also a ruler closely related to the Eastern Mediterranean as the king of Sicily and of Jerusalem, and in private a great enthusiast for Arab culture, became fascinated with the falconry he learned through personal contacts with representatives of the Islamic world. His teacher in this aspect was, among others, Fakhr ad-Din al-Farisi, a Persian sufi (mystic) and advisor to the sultan al-Malik al-Kamil, who stayed at the Sicilian court as a diplomat. Frederic was interested not only in practical skills, but also in falconry literature which was already an established tradition in the East; successive caliphs not only maintained falconers at their courts, but expected from them a deepened reflection on their art, taking the shape of manuscripts. Frederic came

across at least one and presumably even more of those falconry treatises. Most probably he received the *Kitab al-mutanakkili* (a book dedicated to the caliph al-Mutawakkil, ruling in the 9th century), which he handed over to Master Theodore of Antioch, called the Philosopher, a naturalist and interpreter belonging to his court. In 1241 the emperor made by his own hand some addenda and corrections in the adaptation elaborated by Theodore. This text, *Scientia venandi per aves*, became one of the earliest Latin manuals of falconry circulating in medieval Europe; it has survived in numerous handwritten copies.

The falconry passion of Frederic II was part of his much larger research project concerning birds in general. The monarch was keenly interested in ornithology and gave an original contribution to it. First of all, he created his own falconry book, *De Arte venandi cum avibus*, where he coupled some ideas borrowed from Aristotle's Latin version, *Liber Animalium*, with a large practical knowledge of which he was very proud. He maintained at his court a large number of falconers and fowlers that not only took care of the various birds he had in his possession, but also assisted the emperor in the experiments he liked to conduct. Being interested in answering numerous ornithological questions Frederic II implemented a well-planned, systematic research program, which should be cited among the earliest projects of this kind in the history of science. He intended to check, for example, if birds have a sense of smell or if chicks can hatch from eggs incubated by the heat of the sun. *De Arte venandi cum avibus* gathers knowledge not only about falconry and hawking, but also more general ornithological observations. No wonder that this work exercised a lasting influence, circulating in Europe. The sound knowledge it gathered didn't become obsolete quickly; on the contrary, the falconry book of Frederic II was a "long-seller" of its time, copied and distributed not only during the Middle Ages, but also during the Renaissance.

But, contrary to the widespread belief, Frederic II was not the originator of this intellectual and cognitive endeavour, closely related to falconry. The adventure started a century earlier. In fact, falconry, a domain which might seem superfluous to our contemporary eyes, was one of the crucial elements of a new, empirical science that had already started to brave its path in the 12th c. It is not an accident that Adelard of Bath, a northern scholar travelling all over the Mediterranean



A touching love scene from the Codex Manesse, approx. 1330. Conrad von Altstetten, poet and knight (end of the 13th – beginning of the 14th c.), enjoying a moment of romance, still with the falcon on his wrist.

in search of knowledge, was also, among his other works, the author of a small treatise on falconry. Adelard lived approximately between 1080 and 1152. Before settling down, in 1122, in the English town of Bath, he crossed all Europe and the Mediterranean in search of new ideas. He reached Sicily and Antioch. His figure is well known in the history of European science mainly for his Latin translation of the Euclidean *Elements*, based upon an Arabic version. Nevertheless, Adelard was also a naturalist and the author of a book on hawking, *De cura accipitrum*. Even if this dialogue, rather small in size, occupies a marginal position in the work of the medieval scholar, it reflects the influence exerted in the 12th c. by the *Arabica studia*, an empirical domain seen nearly as the opposite in relation to the old type of knowledge, based not on the observation, but mostly on the authority of earlier authors. Novelties, such as those that Adelard could find



Love and falconry mixed together. A portrait of the poet Werner von Teufen (1225-1240) in the Codex Manesse, approx. 1330.

during his seven years long trip around the Mediterranean, became an impulse for a deep change in the attitude of Medieval Man towards nature and a seed for the new *scientia naturalis* flourishing in the 12th c, for during the late Middle Ages falconry became a sign of the harmonious domain of reason over nature. The human skills in controlling the bird became a powerful symbol of triumphant rationality. Nevertheless, the achievements of Frederic II were great and his activity exercised a lasting influence on the falconry tradition. He was the first to bring into the Mediterranean region large species of birds from the north. He requested the capture of gyrfalcons (*Falco rusticolus*) in the region of Lübeck and even in Greenland, and introduced them to Mediterranean falconry, where they became highly appreciated. In this way he commenced the long-distance exchange of birds of prey, which evolved into a large scale, highly lucrative trade later on. As the result of all this complex network of relationships

and cross-cultural borrowings, a common set of techniques emerged; it was used, in spite of all differences in environmental conditions, over large territories of Western Europe and the Middle East. Even nowadays, striking similarities can be observed if we compare the falconry practised in such distant places as Great Britain and the Gulf States, such as Qatar or United Arab Emirates. In fact it is a common heritage shaped during the course of medieval contacts and mutual borrowings.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, the tradition spread both westwards and eastwards, becoming not only an entertainment, but also a source of poetic inspiration. It is not by chance that in Germany a magnificently illuminated manuscript, one of the greatest documents of the so called *Minnesang* poetry, is at the same time one of the most interesting sources of falconry iconography. The *Manessische Liederhandschrift* treasured at Heidelberg (also known under its Latin name of *Codex Manesse*) is a collection of courtly love poetry, illustrated with miniatures commemorating the individual figures of kings and great knights, many of them shown together with their birds, accompanying them not only during the hunting expeditions, but also in romantic moments of encounters with beloved ladies. For Medieval Man the falcon is not only a status symbol; it also connotes tenderness

and intimacy, showing how closely falconry is related to the spiritual and emotional dimensions of human life. No wonder that falconry can be associated with both the warrior and the courtly elites of the Christian and Muslim world. It was also a passion of intellectuals and men deeply interested in spiritual matters. A cultural tradition that joins the East and the West of the Mediterranean treats the relationship between the falconer and the falcon as a multivalent metaphor expressing the most lofty aspects of human experience. In the East, Sufi poets, such as Rumi (a 13th -century Persian mystic, popularly known and beloved in Turkey under the name of Mevlana), used this metaphor to speak about the mystical relationship between man and God. In a mysterious, but charming poem “The Seed Market”, the “perfect falcon” appears at the end, as the most sophisticated and worthy of desire of all the earthly and heavenly treasures:

*Can you find another market like this?
Where,
with your one rose
you can buy hundreds of rose gardens?
Where,
for one seed
get a whole wilderness?
For one weak breath,
a divine wind?
You've been fearful
of being absorbed in the ground,
or drawn up by the air.
Now, your water-bead lets go
and drops into the ocean,
where it came from.
It no longer has the form it had,
but it's still water
The essence is the same.
This giving up is not a repenting.
It's a deep honouring of yourself.
When the ocean comes to you as a lover,
marry at once, quickly,
for God's sake!
Don't postpone it!
Existence has no better gift.
No amount of searching will find this.
A perfect falcon, for no reason
has landed on your shoulder,
and become yours.
(trans. Coleman Barks)*

Compared to this example, Shakespeare might seem terribly down-to-earth using falconry as a parabola of a “perfect” (or in fact not so perfect) marriage in his play *Taming of the Shrew*, where Petruchio, the astute fortune-seeker who courted and finally betrothed Katharina, explains by a falconry metaphor how to reduce a young, rebellious girl into a wifely submission:

*My falcon now is sharp and passing empty;
And till she stoop she must not be full-gorged,
For then she never looks upon her lure.
Another way I have to man my haggard,
To make her come and know her keeper's call,
That is, to watch her, as we watch these kites
That bate and beat and will not be obedient.*

But falconry can be considered as a means of smoothing the disposition of both sexes. The gender aspects are a delicate matter, not easy to speak about. Nevertheless, I must admit that many times the idea crossed my mind that the rejection of the Hunting Tradition is somehow part of a more general

cultural landscape in which the space reserved for traditional male values, virtues, passions and activities has tended to shrink.

The dominant cultural discourse, condemning violence and rejecting “bloodthirsty” hunting practices, brings hidden collateral damage, it destroys the activities that help to positively shape the masculine identity and foster male friendships. Falconry as Intangible Heritage is a legacy of a “wild masculinity” that shapes itself and finds its own vital space of rituals and communitarian identification through the codified cultural practices of falconry and hawking. But, what is to be stressed here, falconry, in its gender aspect, is not based on nor does it foster exclusion. Contrary to many other forms of typically male behaviours or activities, it has never been closed to women. It can be argued that at many a moment in history, falconry was a door permitting women to penetrate into the male world that was closed to them in so many other aspects. Late Medieval and Renaissance falconry (in Europe especially) tended to become a sophisticated, courtly entertainment, accessible also to ladies, as observed around 1410 by the Limbourg brothers on one of the well-known miniatures from *Très riches heures du Duc de Berry* (*The very rich hours of the Duke of Berry*). This explain the predilection for small species of falcons, such as different species of hobbies and kestrels, or merlin (*Falco columbarius*), often used by female hunters. Rather than just another typically male cultural practice, falconry is, once again, a point of contact, a bridge over a gap, this time between masculinity and femininity understood as culturally shaped and codified domains.

In conclusion: many reasons can be pointed out as to why falconry should be maintained as a cultural and spiritual heritage. The preservation of this practice is crucial not just to the benefit of a handful of hobbyists, but to the benefit of whole societies in different parts of the world. For sure, falconry is lived by many of its practitioners as a local activity, building friendships on a small scale. But at the same time, it is a form of culture that opens a door towards a direct, personal experience of universalism, offering an opportunity for cross-cultural contacts. The flight of a falcon opens horizons. It was used as a key, facilitating international and inter-cultural interactions in the past and it still can be used in this function today. Indeed, there is no ideological gap, no difference of credo so great as to divide people, that a common passion for birds of prey cannot put back together again. The decline of the tradition of falconry would indeed belittle the human identity in many aspects. It concerns the relationship both with other men and with the transcendence. It fosters identification, both as a member of a universal community and of a local one. It opens unexplored paths. In all these domains, falcons can offer a great and surprising lesson of being truly human. 🦅

FALCONERS FACING THEIR UNESCO ACKNOWLEDGMENT

ETHICS TO SAFEGUARD THE FALCONRY HERITAGE

Words and photos by Dr. Javier Ceballos

For centuries and in countries all over the world falconry has not had any great changes. However, the acknowledgment of falconry by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage ICH is a milestone in history. Due to this, and by stopping and observing the situation, we can identify different results that mark the present and the near future of falconry.

The main objective of this article is as a means of reflection, in the international falconry community, about both the changes that are occurring in our field, falconry, and the concept and perception of falconry.

Falconry can be defined as the art of caring for and training of birds of prey to hunt wild quarry in their natural environment. This means that falconry is hunting and, therefore, if the wild quarry is not captured and killed, the activity performed cannot be considered falconry.

It has been this way for thousands of years. For this reason, the ties between human beings and the bird of prey has remained alive. Neither religion, race, culture nor socio-economic status are important. Whoever has managed to train a bird of prey and hunt with it has experienced emotions and has nurtured values that provide that person with an identity. The person becomes a member of what we could call the falconry community.

The multinational candidacy before UNESCO has made this interesting reality flourish. Through their birds falconers all over the world share a common identity. Falconry can be considered a way of uniting nations. Through history, living beings that are apparently “small” creatures, such as falcons, have been able to stop wars or have served as diplomatic presents between different governments. When one falconer is going to bed, on the other side of the world the dreams of another falconer are rising. The falconry tradition has been overflying the earth without any man-made barriers for more than 4000 years.

Looking at the cultural goods that UNESCO has established as ICH it comes to our attention that most of them correspond to one specific country or even to one specific geographical area. The opposite happens with falconry. It is amazing that



If the goal of our activity is not hunting, then we are not talking about falconry.



UAE, through its leadership in the Multinational Submission to UNESCO, and the organization of the International Falconry Festival has shown how falconry provides a common identity to falconers from many different cultures.

falconers, even though they belong to such different cultures, feel this common identity that has remained the same through time.

While reflecting on the causes I encountered several arguments.

Falconers find happiness while devoting their life to an occupation to which they have a particular vocation. We have discovered and recognized it voluntarily and freely. We practice it more for the satisfaction it provides us with than for the material goods we get from it. That it provides us with happiness does not mean that it constantly gives us pleasure. In fact, those difficulties are what make it attractive. Falconry entails so many sacrifices that whoever practices it immediately discovers the complicities of their encounter with other falconers. The situation can be compared to the encounter of two mothers that immediately connect while talking about their babies.

Falconry rediscovers in human beings their ties with nature. A falconer in the countryside is a hunter with two legs and two wings. We have this concept so fully integrated that when we go out to the countryside we do not say “I am going to fly my bird” but instead “I am going to fly”. We reach the third dimension, the vertical one, and see the land we are going to hunt through the falcon that is overflying us.

The falconer looks through the eyes of his goshawk or falcon. Knows its capabilities. Examines the launching conditions fast in order to let the bird fly or wait for a better moment. The falconer forms a team with his bird. Unlike a naturalist

that remains as a spectator behind the binoculars, the falconer is part of a team. The falconer participates in the life cycle of the ecosystem where he is. The falconer is the director of an orchestra in which the symphony is performed differently every day. A Bird, human being (and sometimes dog or/and horse/camel) could read their music sheet themselves but they prefer the harmony of putting all their abilities together. The challenge, and therefore also the greater or less great satisfaction are conditioned by the difficulty of the launch. The falconer does not try to control the variables but instead he tries to adapt to them. The ignorance previous to the result, the uncertainty, creates the motivation to cover hundreds of kilometers in order to reach the reserve and hunt a partridge, hair or rabbit.

Here lies one of the greatneses of falconry. The person is face to face with nature in its pure state because the difficulty does not come from him but from the ability that the bird of prey has to escape. Thousands of years of evolution have provided each species with the necessary resources to survive the attack of its predator. Both the rabbit that is chased by our goshawk and the duck that escapes our falcon are risking their lives. Our success practicing falconry will be determined by a factor that does not depend on the person, the prey. The specimen dodges because it risks its life daily while successfully escaping its natural predators; it uses all its resources to also escape the falconry bird. The challenge is to manage to coordinate the efforts and the capabilities to win the game. Every time we go out to hunt we undergo, as



It is amazing that falconers, even though they belong to such different cultures, feel this common identity that has remained the same through time.

a team, the test of survival. For the prey being killed means it failed. For the team not having been successful when hunting has consequences that can be easily accepted. We always find satisfaction in the excitement of hunting and in the simple fact of all of us returning home.

A falconer gets to know himself better when he rediscovers his ties with the natural environment. Through falconry a person finds an activity that makes him noble. I do not mean with this that a person reaches a better social status. In fact, the best falconers are usually people that are close to the countryside and who do not like the big cities' ostentations. Falconry awakens and intensifies in a person his more noble values. The relationship with a bird of prey, as we well know,



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is not based on a hierarchy or in the punishment but instead in the positive subtlety and reinforcement. In fact, it is not the bird that is at a person's disposition but the person who is at the disposition of the bird. This is why falconry is also defined as *the art through which the birds of prey use and extract the best part of human beings*. This attitude towards the service, compromised until death separates the falconer and the bird, says a lot about the altruism and dedication of the falconers, even more when there is no economic compensation. On the contrary, having hunting land, a means of transportation, facilities in which to keep the bird and the most difficult of all, time daily to fly, require a considerable economic effort.

The bird of prey builds in a person abilities and values such as confidence, patience, discernment, observation, sensibility, global perception of the environment, humility, planning of strategies, being unconditional, selflessness, compromise, respect, etc. Falconry awakens one's own humanity and therefore it discovers a person's more noble essence. In the Medieval Ages falconry was considered the best field in which to educate gentlemen. It trained them to ride, understand the orography of the land, coordinate teams, make fast decisions, develop strategies, etc. For this reason it is not surprising that celebrities from the International Olympics Movement as important as Carl Diem or Dr. Misangyi have reasoned about how the practice of falconry has given place to the term "sport".

All these abilities could later be applied in the battlefield. Whoever trained a gentle falcon was called a "gentleman",

nowadays this falcon is known as a peregrine falcon. Many centuries later the term continues to define, in the modern world, a person who has obtained noble qualities, independently of the fact that the person cares for a falcon or not.

Gotten to this point, we can introduce a subject to reflect on and that is currently common. In different nations many enthusiasts (now I do not use the term falconers) care for and train birds of prey but they do not hunt with them. They care for the specimen and use techniques that falconers also use. However, what were initially considered temporary resources for the training and bodybuilding of the birds, with the objective of later introducing them into hunting, constitutes an end in itself. With this approach they achieve spectacular ascending flight to lure hung from air balloons or tied on kites and even hunting lure dragged by remote-controlled aircrafts. In other cases they release jesses for their falcons with the only objective of observing bird dives from the highest height possible. The trainer does not need to blend into the landscape and therefore a large crowd of people can see the flights.

However, going back to the topic of falconry, in force for more than 4000 years, falconry is hunting. Consequently, whoever does not hunt or does not have the intention of hunting can be considered a magnificent trainer of birds but not a falconer. That person has preferred to control the flight more than the uncertainty created by the escape of a wild prey. José Ortega y Gasset in his wonderful text about hunting (1942) reflects on an issue that is worth mentioning. "... *Hunting is an imitation of the animal. Therefore we will not be understanding hunting if we take it as a human fact and not as a zoological fact that man takes delight in producing.*"

Modern society does not make the life of falconers easy. It encourages us to continuously obtain the greatest quantity of product possible, without much effort, in a little amount of time and if possible with a large public. Falconry does not fulfill any of these requirements. To hunt a few dozens of specimen in a season requires a great effort and a dedication of 365 days a year. The witness of success is oneself and at the most a companion. A falconer enjoys flying alone; the person does not need someone else's acknowledgement to feel fully satisfied. Also, a falconer does not need the judges

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Every time we go out to hunt we undergo, as a team, the test of survival. The falconer participates in the life cycle of the ecosystem where he is.

of a competition to verify if a good falconry takes place or not. A falconer's own sport moral, the person's falconry ethics, shows if the launch has been noble with the prey, with their bird and with himself.

Nevertheless, falconry is not exempt from the contamination of the aforementioned values proposed by society.

The media, immediate access to information, breeding centers, the welfare state and other factors, make it easy to buy a bird of prey for anyone who is willing to pay some money for it.

Instead of taking into account all the implications that are present when hunting with a bird of prey the new amateurs first buy it, then train it and then they complain about not having a hunting reserve available. The birds remain in





their perches “to use them for breeding” and in less worse cases they fly to hunt game birds. It increases the number of bird of prey before the public, in medieval markets, prey competitions or contests that measure the speed of falcons. In these cases nature is not the challenge anymore but instead it is the altimeter, speed or the captured prey that almost does not have the possibility to escape. The uncertainty of the death gives place to routine. The task of interpreting the natural hunting environment is substituted by the challenge of achieving more meters of height or fewer seconds in the distance traveled. Now it is not a matter of witnessing nature but the artificial. The goal is to control the situation in every possible way in order to reach a measure or a score in a competition. The rivalry between falconers awakens and at the same time attractive prizes nurture it. The integration of a person in nature is anecdotal. The person looks for the first piece of open land to shorten the travel time, avoid hunting search efforts and not have to pay the hunting reserve.

When switching the attention from what is natural to what is artificial the falconer’s gaze is lost. Even though there are many common elements with falconry now we are not talking about the same thing. It is not the same to hunt with than to train birds.

With this I do not mean that I am against the competitions



Falconry transcends our existence. It makes us the link in the human chain that for more than four thousand years has found a style of life in the ties we have with the winged creature.



If by falconry we understand hunting then we are witnesses of the heritage that is acknowledged by UNESCO. We have the privilege and responsibility of maintaining it alive.

of birds of prey in flight. I believe that if they are well organized, with critical speakers and with quarry that are difficult to capture, as carrier pigeons can be, they can carry out interesting functions of bringing the birds of prey close to society. We must keep in mind that society is influenced by whatever is spectacular and involves a large crowd. These activities, such as exhibitions of prey in flight, competitions or medieval markets that come from falconry have such a large public that they have good media coverage. Therefore, to see a man with a bird on their fist is known as falconry. It is apparently difficult to distinguish between who is a falconer and who is a bird trainer. On the other hand, it is as difficult as to presence if a man (or a woman) hunts wild quarry with their bird of prey.

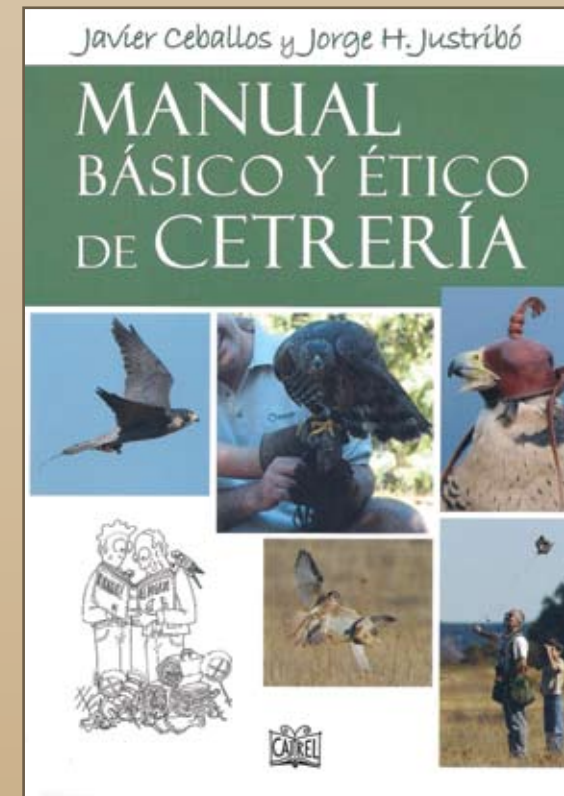
We can apply Hegel’s idea of “*in art shape is depth*” to falconry.

In the way we relate to each other and how we fly our birds we experience those values and emotions that counterweigh our efforts.

In every human activity excellence in its practice is the pillar for it to survive.

Our way of understanding falconry is going to determine our behavior. If by falconry we understand hunting then we are witnesses of the heritage that is acknowledged by UNESCO. We have the privilege and responsibility of maintaining it alive. Falconry transcends our existence. It makes us the link in the human chain that for more than four thousand years has found a style of life in the ties we have with the winged creature.

It is time to identify the good practices of a falconer. To



It is time to identify the good practices of a falconer. To establish a code of ethics that gathers all the common points that must be taken into account by everyone who practices falconry in order to reestablish the basis of the falconry community. http://www.mcu.es/novedades/2011/novedades_Patrimonio_Cetreria.html

establish a code of ethics that gathers all the common points that must be taken into account by everyone who practices falconry in order to reestablish the basis of the falconry community. This does not mean that other ways of understanding the ties with the birds of prey must be left aside, such as training without a hunting purpose or flight exhibitions and competitions. It means that it is important to work on the feeling of belonging to the falconry community. Discover that our passion has also been lived by our ancestors many generations ago and that it depends on us for it to stay this way.

Dr. Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente (1965) captured this message in an extraordinary manner:

“Falconry is not only a differentiated hunting system but it is also the art that has driven human beings into reaching the deepest and strongest ties with the animal. For this reason, falcon brother, when once more, with the bird on your fist, at daybreak, you go out to hunt that specimen

that always seems like the first one and in reality could be the last one, take into account that your emotions reflect one-hundred thousand years of powerful hunters”.

A good strategy to maintain the falconry heritage legacy consists on identifying possible representative figures in each of the communities. In the profession they are known as “masters of falconry”. The name is not give to someone who knows a lot but to whoever teaches and becomes renown. When meeting masters of falconry it is not difficult to put to practice the common elements that are specific to falconry. This is how the task of teaching the good practices to the rest of the falconers is significantly optimized and simplified.

It is also adequate to accurately inform society. For this it is necessary to identify the speakers. It is not easy to find people who know about falconry very well and that also know how to talk about it rigorously and in an attractive way. By planning the messages depending on the type of public and the chosen means the efficiency of the presentations is significantly improved.

As the UNESCO Convention (Paris, 2003) states, in order to safeguard ICH it is necessary to identify and start measures such as identifying, documenting, investigating preserving, promoting, value, transmitting (basically through formal and non-formal education) and revitalizing the heritage in its different aspects. This is not invented from one day to another but instead it requires a global strategic plan in each nation. So there is a lot of work ahead. In the case of falconry a specific consulting job difficult for the governments to recognize is necessary. Lets hope that in the end UNESCO demands it. Falconers from different countries face the problems and therefore we are constantly learning from each other. We have many educational resources, texts with a set of rules, experience in creating associations, a background in relations with the administrations, etc. Putting all this knowledge in common in a coordinated way makes safeguarding falconry easier.

In the XXI century falconers maintain their particular style of life in the diverse and varied places in the world. There are, besides the inherent difficulties of practicing falconry, more serious ones that come from the lack of regulations by each government. We are in time of consolidating the acknowledgment of falconry in UNESCO and in society. The concept that people can have about falconry, currently and in the future, is a task that corresponds to falconers. As falconers we must keep on flying high up in order for anyone who does not fly to discover that in falconry there are no frontiers. 🦅

The Ladies Hawk: *the Merlin*

Extract from Chapter XI of Part IV of John Loft's translation of "Le Fauconnerie de Francois de Saincte Aulaire".

'There remains the principal flight for giving pleasure to the watching Ladies; it is the flight at the Skylark, against which, since it is amongst the smallest and lightest of birds, we bring the smallest, lightest, and fastest of the Hawks to make war on it, and that is the Merlin. She, in view of her speed and courage rather than her strength, is sometimes used in other flights, such as at the Partridge, but her proper role is to fly the Skylark. Knowing herself to be light and built to stay on the wing, she recognises the Skylark to be light and of the same ability and she therefore devotes herself to striving against it in preference to any other bird.'



Anthony Crosswell and John Loft.

Well known for his long devotion to the Merlin, John Loft wrote:



The Stone-falcon
or
Falco columbarius

He stands on the stone he is named for

And is still enough to be made of it

Only the long feathers of his mail stir

His head is sunk and though his eyes are bright

They look at nothing

The white splashes around him

Tell how often and how long he may be seen there

By any of the invisible creatures that share his moor

There is nothing here and now to tell what happens

When his perch is empty and that concentrated energy is released

I fulfilled a lifelong ambition this past hawking season when my Merlin "Myrtle" [Falco columbarius] took a Skylark [Alauda arvensis] after a classic ringing flight, a flight of the highest quality and the best flight I have ever had in 18 years of falconry.

Into the Mystic...

by Andy 'Anderson', photos Chris Galeski

I fulfilled a lifelong ambition this past hawking season when my Merlin "Myrtle" [Falco columbarius] took a Skylark [Alauda arvensis] after a classic ringing flight. A flight of the highest quality and the best flight I have ever had in 18 years of falconry.

Firstly a brief introduction for readers unacquainted with the skylark might be helpful. The skylark spends its spring and summer here in the British Isles on the upland heather moorlands, nesting on the ground, hidden amongst grass and other vegetation. Three to six eggs are laid in June. A second or third brood may be started later in the year.

During this period the skylarks powers of flight are heavily influenced by their body condition and moult.

When in their most vulnerable stage of moult, the larks fly as close to the ground as possible, looking for the first available cover to put in to. We call these ground larks for obvious reasons. As the larks progress through the moult, their confidence also increases and a lark that intends to out fly the merlin can go up to some considerable height. These larks are called mounters and

100m - 200m is not uncommon before the merlin fetches it and leaves the lark with the only option of dropping to the nearest cover below.

The third category of lark is, of course, the legendary ringer that switches to "soaring mode" and tries to escape the merlin by ascending vertically. These flights can typically go very, very, high and cover a vast acreage of sky.

At first I never thought larks could be caught in any real style on the moor, as the abundance of heather, reed beds, and

long tussocks of mixed grasses... etc., offered the Ideal refuge for any pressed skylark. However, as this was often the scenario early on in their moult, it provided Myrtle with lots of valuable experience and confidence on them. It was a very different lark all too soon, when clean moulted, fit and confident, they only have one evasive tactic in mind, and that is to out fly the Merlin and reach for the heavens.

The day in question started with Myrtle in high condition, at a robust 185g. The weather was 14C, with no wind and high barometric pressure. The sky with heavy cloud and almost black in parts. We struck off along the white

grass moorland edge. My pointer Pip quickly found a lark... Myrtle away... only to peel off as the lark stood on its tail and rocketed skyward. She pumped around a bit before coming back to my ungarnished raised fist as usual. We continued... straight away a lark got up at our feet...chirruping away as it climbed. Myrtle left the fist in a flash boring upwards in its wake...the lark...a strong one...going vertical...up and up and up. Myrtle climbing in tight rings below and to the right of the lark, till at one point I thought she was bound to chuck it as the lark had gained such ascendancy. Not a bit of it... she pressed on hard till her tight rings had become huge powerful circuits, climbing hard and gaining ground on the lark. At about 250m

I saw the lark give a sideways jink, and I knew Myrtle had fetched it.

Then...they both started to "ring" parallel to each other in separate air-spaces. Up and

up and up they went till [without binoculars] I lost sight of the lark in the darkening cloud, but could still see Myrtle as a tiny silhouette... by now, tearing round the sky. The flight had flattened out and it was now a tail chase [in the upper air]... full of twists, turns and high jinks, way up against the darkening sky...then...she stooped. I saw the first few hundred feet of her vertical...then lost sight of her as she came down below the skyline. I never saw any slashing or throw up's on the way down...just a vertical.

It took me 20 minutes to walk across the moor, to where I found her on her lark in a patch of grass and reeds. She had only just begun to eat after plucking it by the time I found

her, and calmly stepped up to the fist, where I took incredible pride in feeding her up. I savoured this special moment whilst looking all around, just the three of us in an ocean of heather moorland. No camcorder, camera, or phone...just silence...and a burned in memory of a flight of the highest order.

As we jumped into the Jeep and trundled off the moor, a song came on the radio. It was Van Morrison's..."Into the mystic"...it kind of summed up my day. 🦅



ONE MANS ATTEMPTS TO BREED MERLINS

By Nick Wilkinson

I don't give advice. However, I will recount how I breed merlins, that way I can't be blamed if someone attempts to breed them and it all goes wrong. People ask me how I do it? I tell them, it is attention to detail 365 days a year and 366 on a leap year. I used to be a, don't use force, use a bigger hammer man. However, once I set out on the path of unlocking the mysteries of merlin breeding, I soon found that I needed to be a perfectionist - not an easy task. Problems pop up and by curing one problem, I very often create another. A dogged determination is required. I have threatened to give up on many occasions. So for what it is worth, I will recount my journey. My project is still a work in progress. I don't claim to know all the answers, but my experience might save future breeders years of trial and error.

Looking back through my records, I see that I first bred merlins in 1998 after three years of trying. I can't remember how I even ended up with a pair. I bumbled along for a couple of years with limited success and then my breeding merlin died, coming up to laying a second clutch. I decided I had had enough. They were difficult to breed, aggressive as pairs and from other people's accounts difficult to keep alive and breed on a regular basis. I hatched three from my first clutch that year and was about to let my proven jack go, when I had a change of mind. A friend had bred some, so I swapped a merlin with him to go with my proven jack. At about that time my passion for flying falcons was on the wane and I decided to take up the challenge of merlin breeding. Some people had a few pairs, but no one was breeding them on a regular basis. All of the big falcon breeders seemed to have given up for one reason or another, so this was a challenge I could get my teeth into.

Merlins at the time were in short supply, so it was a case of begging or borrowing from other people. I had kept back a spare jack and Tony James kindly sent up a merlin to go with it. From the start I had reservations about this merlin - she just didn't look right. Along came the breeding season, she laid three eggs and died. I phoned Tony, he was



Bill Heinrich's passage merlin.

very good about it and offered to send up another replacement. The next year, true to his word he sent up a sister to the dead merlin. Along came the breeding season, she also laid three eggs and died. I was devastated. I had been given two merlins and now both were dead. I suspected that it had to be coccidiosis. I didn't know much about coccidiosis, although I had read a few documents on it and merlins. Basically, it could kill merlin chicks being parent reared in aviaries and merlins seemed to suffer from it far more than any other falcon. I now started to take coccidiosis very, very seriously. I only had a couple of pairs at this time, but it was obvious to me that I wouldn't make much progress unless I had sufficient pairs to make comparisons. I set about increasing my breeding pairs until I had seven. Beyond this number, I decided there would be a good chance of men in white coats arriving to take me away to the asylum. Let the stress begin and I can assure you that it did! I was most fortunate to have a mentor in my task, Paul Mackinder. Paul and John Loft had very generously donated a jack to the cause. Paul had successfully bred merlins for many years, but now had progressed to larger falcons. I was heading the other way, I had bred

peregrines and was downsizing to merlins. Soon after arriving, this pristine jack developed bumble-foot. Arghhhh!! I had to phone Paul, apologise and assure him that I was doing my best to rectify the situation. Again a very long story, but due to a poorly positioned perch in a single aviary, I ended up with four merlins with chronic bumble-foot, a condition I hadn't experienced for over twenty years. This was one of the lowest points, but a valuable lesson was learned - that aviary design was so important.

Back to the cocci. I trawled the Internet, quizzed chicken farmers, pigeon keepers, but was still swimming in treacle. Then I read a document about coccidiosis in captive kangaroos. This was an inspired piece of writing and explained the enemy in layman's terms, I now knew my foe. What jumped out from the pages was the fact that the sanctuary owner who picked up roo poo daily, didn't have a problem with cocci, owners who didn't pick up daily did. I was out bush beating one day and some farmers were talking about free range chickens. I heard them say that chickens on fresh ground did well, subsequent chickens placed on the same ground were troubled by disease, I assumed cocci. I spoke to pigeon racing people, who told me they had never won a race until they medicated for coccidia and that they routinely medicated for it during the breeding season. It became obvious to me, that if I could control coccidiosis, I might have better success at breeding merlins.

I asked around and Harkers Appertex was mentioned, I acquired some and read the instructions. The recommendation was to give one tablet to pigeons to clear them of coccidiosis. It sounded too good to be true. Dosage came into the equation, people thought half a tablet for the merlin, a quarter for the jack. I started to medicate. I was now no longer losing merlins, but I still had some very sick birds on my hands, especially at egg laying. Appertex might have worked for pigeons, it wasn't very effective on my merlins. Then someone came across a document, where a pigeon was given 128 times



Preparing my merlin mix for chicks over twelve days. From left, quail, hare, pigeon, partridge, chicks. Most of the fat is removed, so are any shotgun pellets that must be found. Merlins can be successfully reared on nothing other than quail.



Note the wood shavings to soak up the mutes.



A deep layer of shavings and all feeding from the bowl.

the normal dose of Appertex to little effect - slight vomiting and loose faeces, WOW! This piece of information meant that Appertex had to be very safe. It also stated that it was rapidly absorbed with maximum concentrations 5 - 8 hours after dosing, with a half-life in pigeons of about 3 days. I had done further research and knew the lifecycle of the cocci was 8 days, so I started experimenting. To cut another long story short, over the period of a few years I developed my present treatment for coccidia. Four tablets are administered over a ten day period, twice during the breeding season. The first course is timed to finish approximately two weeks before the first egg is laid. The second course is started as soon as the last egg from the first clutch is laid, to finish ten days before the first egg from the second clutch is laid. Appertex has no taste, so could be easily administered on the daily food ration. I was now controlling my enemy, it was subdued, but still present.

I now started to think how I could keep the merlins away from their mutes. Remember the person who picked up roo poo? Well, it wasn't practical to go in the aviary daily to clean up merlins mutes. The only solution was to keep the merlins away from their mutes, but how? Then I had one of those Eureka moments, usually this takes place about 3am, I then jump out of bed and write them down. Would it be possible



Still feeding from the bowl, but now there is plywood under the platform to which chicks are tied.

to get a pair of merlins in an aviary to live their lives at 4ft? If I placed everything in the aviary at that height, would they get used to living there and forsake the aviary floor, it was definitely worth a try. So I altered an aviary, everything at 4ft, I mean everything, perches, baths, nest ledges, food platforms, food stashing stations, nothing above and just a ramp coming up from the aviary floor below. The ramp was for feather clipped merlins heavy with eggs to climb up, in the event they ended up down there. It worked, there was no reason for the merlins to go to the floor any more and they stayed up. I also started cutting my food into very small portions. I wanted the merlins to eat from perches, not drop food onto the floor to be retrieved later. Chicks I cut into three, a pigeon I might cut into twenty pieces after crushing the bones with a hammer. It didn't cure the cocci problem, but it helped.

Preparing my merlin mix for chicks over twelve days. From left, quail, hare, pigeon, partridge, chicks. Most of the fat is removed, so are any shotgun pellets that must be found. Merlins can be successfully reared on nothing other than quail.

So, I was not losing merlins, but I was still not having great success. I contacted my mentor Paul and told him that I was changing all of my incubators, as the present ones weren't working very well. I had lots of fertile eggs, but poor hatch rates and often weak chicks. He then added another piece to the jigsaw. He said that it had nothing to do with the

incubators, I needed to look back in the aviaries. He said incubation was mechanical and that it was the quality of the egg that was the most important factor. I keep detailed notes every season and on average these go to about 80 pages. So, I trolled back through my notes and sure enough I could find faults all along the line. I set out on a course of action to rectify these faults. To cut yet another long story short it was mostly to do with the feeding of adults, the nest ledges and nesting material. I now kept up a good feeding regime the whole year, not returning to mostly day old chicks outside the breeding season. This seemed to have an added bonus of reducing dramatically the aggression seen in pairs during the breeding season. Was the reason the merlins were so aggressive, because they were not feeling well when coming up to breeding, because of a poor off season diet? Too early to tell yet, as this is still one of those work in progress issues.

I do not parent rear, I never have, and probably never will. I have heard too many horror stories to take me down that path. I have also heard other horror stories. Merlins aren't like kestrels or large falcons. Feed a merlin rabbit for a day and you would probably kill it. At the other extreme, feed too much fat and you would probably kill it. Someone said to me once that he had five merlin chicks at seven days old and they all started to die and did die over the next couple of days. I said, 'Did you mince up a whole wood pigeon and



Friends collect the finished product. Their grins say it all.

feed it to them'? He was incredulous, how did I know that? Because I had done the same thing once, too much fat! We all know of someone who had a pair of kestrels, fed them nothing but chicks, they laid five eggs, all hatched, all reared. It might work for kestrels, it doesn't work for merlins. My feeding regime for adults at present is three days chicks, three days quail, three days pigeon, back to start. Note the words 'at present'.

How do I rear my chicks? They are all creche reared. How do I stay clear of the dreaded cocci? I feed them minced food, all from a bowl until they are practically hard-penned. I don't want them dragging food about their platform, standing in and eating contaminated mutes. Once they are flying around the aviary, they then progress to a piece of plywood on the aviary floor underneath the creche rearing ledge, that day-old chicks are tied to. This board is introduced by way of a hatch from outside the aviary. Because it is under the platform, no merlin can mute on it from above. Every merlin that leaves here is given a ten day course of Appertex to see it over the initial training period, starting the day it is taken from the aviary. Merlins can keep their coccidiosis under control, but it is at times of stress that it multiplies to the extent that an attack can occur. Laying eggs for the merlin and their initial training for the young are, in my opinion, times of most stress. You don't hear of a merlin laying three eggs and the jack dying, even though the pair are living in exactly the same conditions.

People say a merlin will attack, kill a jack when he has a bath and is vulnerable. I don't believe this. I think when a jack has a bath, the merlin doesn't recognise him. To her, he is an

intruder in her territory and needs chasing off. However, that is impossible in an aviary and she may eventually kill him. To cut out the danger, it is possible during the breeding season to supply merlins with water that is insufficient for them to bath in. There is nothing natural about the aviary situation, it is a wholly artificial environment for merlins to breed in. I feather-clip my merlins and blunt talons to protect the jacks during the breeding season.

However, this may not

be necessary in the future, if good feeding all-year-round turns off aggression. Outside the breeding season they live in separate aviaries divided by a wire door.

I only use quality merlins reared on quality food for my breeding stock. My aviaries are nine square meters, this incorporates two aviaries and a double door. I not only medicate for coccidiosis, I also worm all merlins twice a year. I am of the opinion that merlin breeding should be routine, I don't say it will be easy. We just need to work out the formula. Success doesn't depend on one factor, you need to get all factors correct. I equate it to a machine with lots of cogs. If all the cogs are lined up and in good order, baby merlins drop out of the end. If some of those cogs are misplaced, or have teeth missing, the machine starts to malfunction and works intermittently.

I am not a scientist, just a person with a passion for merlins. I believe that coccidiosis is the major factor in holding back the propagation of merlins. Coccidiosis is very species specific and can differ within a species. My guess is that merlins have their own specific cocci, that cannot be transferred to other falcons or hawks. Chickens apparently have seven types of cocci, but only two are troublesome. The chicken industry has millions to throw at the problem, I am just going on my own observations - intuition and I might be wrong.

As I mentioned at the beginning, these writings are just my own observations and attempts to breed merlins. They are not instructions for others to follow. Take from them what you will and I wish you all the very best if you attempt the task. I only hope that you have as understanding a wife as my own! 🦅

TREE-NESTING PEREGRINES COMING BACK TO POLAND

By Janusz Sielicki

All photos by Slawomir Sielicki

European Peregrine Falcon Working Group,
www.falcopegrinus.net



Long hoped for in Poland, a nest of Peregrines in a tree was found in spring 2012 in an old nest of White-tailed Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) in the north-east part of country. For the first time since 1964 Peregrine chicks from a tree nest were ringed in Poland. That was a very symbolic moment.

Two eyasses were male and female. They were ringed by Slawomir Sielicki from the Society for Wild Animals "Falcon" in the presence of Adam Mrugasiewicz - he was the person who ringed the last known Polish tree-nesting Peregrines 48 years ago. The ringing team also included Piotr Adamiok, who found this nest, our friends from the German Falconers Order (DFO), Polish falconers and local hosts, foresters and ornithologists.



Czeslaw Sielicki with the first Peregrines chicks in Wloclawek.

In previous years only single birds from Poland nested in trees in Germany; there is also one confirmed case of nesting in a tree in Poland in 2010, but it was only discovered after the fledging.

Polish falconers, Czeslaw Sielicki and Zygmunt Pielowski, initiated preparations to restore the Peregrine in Poland in the 1980's and our first reintroductions started in 1990. The project was conducted by falconers in cooperation with many enthusiasts. It was a joint project of the Polish Falconers Club Gniazdo Sokolnikow, with the Polish Hunting Association PZL, local administration of Wloclawek and Krakow regions. From the beginning the tree-nesting population was the aim of the project. A total of 350

Peregrines were released in Polish forests in the period 1990 – 2009. The tree-nesting part of the project was not as successful as the similar project conducted in Germany, as discussed at the Second International Peregrine Conference Poland 2007. From 1999 Peregrines bred only in Polish cities and mountains.

In 2010 the Society for Wild Animals "Falcon" started a Polish Peregrine Project on a new basis. The plan was to intensify reintroduction aimed at the tree-nesting population on a small number of hacking stations. A total of 56 Peregrines were released in three hacking sites in 2010. The birds came from breeders from Poland, Denmark, Germany, Czech and Slovak Republics and



Left: Chicks from the first nest of Peregrines on a tree in Poland in 2012



Austria. In 2011 closer cooperation with the German Falconers Club /DFO/ was started and DFO members and the breeding station run by prof. Christian Saar in Hamburg should provide Peregrines for the release in Poland. A total of 66 young Peregrines were released in Poland in 2011. The birds came from falconers of DFO and breeders in Poland, Denmark, Czech and Slovak Republics. Birds were released in four hacking sites all over the country. This first year of cooperation of DFO falconers with the Falcon Society proved to be effective. In this new Peregrine Project a total of 122 were released in 2010 and 2011.

The story of the decline and local extinction of Peregrine Falcon populations is well known. Falconers in many countries were involved in Peregrine restoration projects. There is still one population which needs our help. In Central and Eastern Europe the Peregrine Falcon was traditionally nesting in trees, using nests of other large birds. The tree-nesting population occupied an area from northern Germany, Poland, Belarus to forests of central Russia, as well as the Baltic countries - Denmark, southern Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and southern Finland. That ecotype disappeared in the entire area of its existence in 1960's.

Falconers and conservationists at the beginning were very focused on saving the species in general. The successful projects in USA, southern Germany and many other countries, proved that that we know how to breed and release falcons. These methods were then used to save many other species worldwide, especially the Californian Condor and many smaller falcons. When the project aimed at general Peregrine restoration in Germany was finished the idea of restoring the tree-nesting population was raised. Peregrines did not start themselves to reoccupy those habitats. The idea of imprinting on a place of birth was accepted as a basis for restoration of this ecotype.

The German project aimed at restoration of tree-nesting ecotype based on that principle started in 1990 and was conducted by ornithologists from German Peregrine



Top: Peregrine chicks from Germany for reintroduction in Poland.

Above: E. Leix, T. Heckell and H-A. Hewicker (German Falconers Club), J. Sielicki and S. Sielicki ("Falcon" Society).

Working Group (Arbeitskreis Wanderfalkenschutz e.V.) in cooperation with German Falconers Order (DFO - Deutsche Falkenorden e.V. - which provided young Peregrines for reintroduction) and Hunting Corporation of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. A total of circa 400 Peregrines were released in forests of north-eastern Germany, additionally more than 100 birds were relocated to forests from wild nests in cities. The first nest on tree was found in 1996 in Germany. Growth of this initial population is very slow. In 2010 the total tree-nesting population in Germany was circa 30 pairs. The German Peregrine Working Group (AWS) decided to cancel reintroductions in Germany from 2010, only a limited number of chicks from nests in cities which are under risk of losing chicks will be still relocated to forests.

A flight in the company of a **WILD PEREGRINE FALCON**

Words by Elisabeth Leix
Photos by Klaus Leix



We live in Bavaria, a region in Germany, called Allgäu, near the Alps. Unfortunately, except for raven crows we have no small game to hunt with a peregrine falcon flying from a high pitch. Nevertheless, despite growing up in an area with little game, my passion is to hunt with high-flying peregrine falcons, preferably tiercels. Even so, yearly we try to hunt at least some weeks with the falcons, but after that we focus exclusively on crows with our birds.

Ordinarily when I am not flying a young bird, I always take my falcon out of its chamber on the third Tuesday in July to start training. As everybody knows, it is still warm at this time of the season and in the beginning I do the training flights early in the evening. The longer my falcon flies earlier the more accustomed he becomes, until I can finally fly him at midday. This has a great advantage, because I can use the thermal drafts successfully on the mountain slopes. But I cannot do this alone, because our falcons reach very high altitudes in the thermals, and they may fly out of sight. Almost every year we

go to Scotland to hunt red grouse with our falcons, so they are used to difficult and hard winds and mountains, which was also very helpful for me for the following experience. I received an invitation from a hunter for an official event; he wanted to see how it really is hunting with falcons on partridges. I joyfully accepted the invitation for a date at the end of September. Besides Bryan, my tiercel peregrine, I had Aska, my female German short hair with me. The area to which we were invited was framed with a small mountain range. When we finally started the hunt, my Aska went on a firm point after a long course in a turnip field. After some nervous waiting to be sure that she had not pointed a hare, I decided finally to slip my falcon.

I went a distance away from the group, where I faced the wind to unhood Bryan. With his big black eyes he looked at me, wonderfully as usual, to orient himself and he beat his wings powerfully down on my fist to fly off in the direction of the mountain range. Quickly I had him in my binoculars,

because for me was clear that he would fly to the mountains to be carried up on the wind. I kept an eye on him all the time and saw that he climbed higher and higher. Quickly he reached the ridgeline and finally climbed into the clear blue of the sky. I had some trouble not to lose Bryan in the binoculars when he turned himself away on his side. I lifted my left hand carefully and waved my glove a bit, in order to remind him that we had something else planned here. He knew the signal and turned to fly back in my direction. Suddenly a second falcon came into the view of my binoculars.

It was a tiercel also, and so Bryan was distracted and played with the second falcon in the air. In the beginning it looked as if they attacked each other, however, it out to be merely a friendship flight. I waved my glove once more to lure Bryan into me. Although he broke out over and over again and did not come directly over me as usual, eventually both falcons drifted together back over me. In the meantime, I was asking Klaus, my husband, over and over again whether my dog, Aska, was still on point. He could not see both falcons and my arms seemed to drop from fatigue because this flight had lasted so long. However, every falconer knows that under the circumstances, no matter how strong the pain is in your arm, you cannot lower your binoculars.

Both falcons got closer and closer until they were almost over me. I told Klaus to keep an eye on my dog and from the orientation of my binoculars he could locate the approximate position of the falcons. When they were finally over me, I asked Klaus to flush the game, and at the end now I had to choose to look at only one of the falcons. I heard in the background the noise from the covey of partridges flying off, and at that exact moment both falcons tilted into the stoop. It was fantastic sight, like a pair skating, a symbiosis, and a

highlight for any falconer. I decided to keep an eye on the falcon on the left and hoped that it would be my Bryan. Do you know the different sounds of falcons cutting through the sky? According to its speed the sound changes and judging by what I heard, Bryan must have been very high and coming down very fast.

In fact the sound did not agree with the scene in my binoculars and I realized that I had chosen to look at the wild falcon. Immediately I took down my binoculars to search for Bryan. I only saw him in his climb-out after he hit the partridge and then arc over to come back down on it. I ran out to my falcon and was incredibly pleased for the really wonderful experience. It was the best flight of the year, and I was very proud and happy. The wild falcon circled around us a few more times to disappear into the clear blue sky.

Finally, our hosts also came along but they were disappointed not to have seen anything at all. They only saw the falcon fly off my fist, and then they had to wait a long time until the partridges got up, then he was there again. Though they were pleased with my success, they wondered whether we could do it another time so that they could see something, because that was the reason for the invitation. Although I tried to explain to them that this flight was really unusual, they probably did not understand me, and it was so sad that they did not see what I just witnessed. It was simply a brilliant hunting flight like every falconer wishes to have.

And some may know the saying of Franz Grillparzer (Austrian writer, 1791-1872):

**“Moons and years pass and have passed on always,
nevertheless, a nice moment shines a lifetime through.
And when I’m old and grey and can’t go out hunting,
this moment will shine in me forever.”** 🦅



A WOMEN'S WORKING GROUP FOR THE IAF



At The Right Place at The Right Time:

The idea of a Women's Working Group (WWG) came about by a small group of women who met each other while attending international falconry meets. Discussions between friends took place about articles and surveys that had been written concerning women and their roles in falconry. All of this culminated at the IAF meeting in 2011. During this meeting in Al Ain which was hosted by the United Arab Emirates Club, the president of the IAF Frank Bond introduced the Women's Working Group (WWG). His acknowledgment of the growth of women in falconry, their possibilities and demands was well articulated. The ladies in the WWG are all experienced falconers and active members in their clubs. We look forward to working together with IAF to further the role of women in falconry.

Face to Face:

We met as a group for the first time in Belgium, October 2011. Veronique Blontrock was a most gracious hostess opening up her home to us. We spent several days hawking in the field

and attending the Club Marie De Bourgogne meet witnessing some spectacular flights. We found ourselves discussing the differences between women and men in the art of falconry, the role of women in falconry, and the future for women in this art. As the week progressed, the more we talked the more we recognized the need for a group to assist with the communication and networking for women in falconry. Just weeks later, we met again at the Third International Falconry Festival in the UAE. It was at the IAF AGM meeting we presented the idea of a formation of a Women's Working Group for the IAF. Just weeks after the festival, all five members of the IAF Women's Working Group received an invitation as sponsored guests to attend The Third Falconry Festival in Doha, Qatar. This meeting was most beneficial as it allowed us to spend an entire week together dedicating two full days in developing an outlined proposal and strategic plan for our group. As a result, we've been able to continue the progression of our efforts. We sincerely thank Qatar IAF delegate Zayed Al Maadeed and the Algannas Society for their generosity and allowing us this opportunity.

Why The WWG Exists:

In the last decade we have seen the number of women in falconry rise substantially. This is an encouraging trend that demonstrates how falconry transcends demographics. The WWG exists to open up new ideas and methods of communication for women falconers. Women face different challenges in and off the field and relate differently to each other. In most cases around the world women have had to repeatedly look to each other to practice falconry. Even today it is still predominately a man's sport with the number of women practicing it very low. The intent of this group is to help bring women together to exchange information, go hunting with their birds, support those interested in falconry and activities, and encourage participation.

Current Members:

Current members include Veronique Blontrock (Belgium), Tula Stapert (Holland), Elisabeth Leix (Germany), Lauren McGough (USA), and Dianne Moller (USA). Each of the ladies on this group are active falconers and wish to support women world-wide in their pursuit of this wonderful art. Members of the WWG group are appointed by the President of IAF (currently Frank Bond) and intentionally being kept small until we have a chance to get more organized. We will be forming committees and work groups to help accomplish tasks in the future.

The Future:

We are currently compiling a database of all existing falconry clubs worldwide. From this we hope to gain information about the numbers of practicing women falconers. In the US, there are about 4,000 licensed falconers, with about 11% women falconers. It would be interesting to learn about the numbers of women in lesser known parts of the world. From this data we hope to reach out and learn more about the needs of those falconers and develop new ideas. We are looking at new projects and the formation of sub working groups to involve more women participants. Each of the club leadership will be asked to appoint a liaison (male or female) to be a point of contact with the WWG. The role of the liaison will include advising women in your country on falconry legislation and practice, provide materials for the IAF publications and assist in documenting the status of women in falconry worldwide. We look forward to working with each of the falconry clubs and organizations on this initiative. If you are interested in learning more about this group or possibly becoming involved, information may be available in the future on the IAF website www.iaf.org

Please note: At the time this article was written there were the five original members of the WWG; since, three additional women have been appointed by the IAF President; Sue Cecchini- USA, Christine Basset- Switzerland, Marcela Medkova- Czech Republic.

WWG BIOGRAPHIES



Dianne Moller
Chair, USA

Born and raised in southern Wisconsin, USA, Dianne has had an interest in raptors and wildlife since an early age. Her mother was her biggest influence in learning to appreciate and respect nature. She is a well-known falconer with a passion for flying longwings, particularly female merlins. She is currently a Director for the North American Falconers Association (NAFA) and Chair of the NAFA Strategic Planning Committee. Since 2002, she has held a number of board positions for her state club; The Wisconsin Falconers Association. Dianne is the founder and director of Hoo's Woods Raptor Center, a successful non-profit raptor education center.

Elisabeth Leix
Vice Chair, Germany



Elisabeth grew up in a part of Germany known as Bavaria on her grandmother's farm. She had her first kestrel when she was just 12 years old. Since 1985 she has been involved with the peregrine release programs in Germany and since 1990 also in Poland, she lived from 1989-1996 there. Today she is the coordinator between the DFO and the Stowarzzenie Sokol (Poland) for the German-Polish tree nesting program. Since 2000 she has served as treasurer, examination board for falconers and hunters, and at 2002 Vice President of the DFO. Her favorite hawk is the peregrine male and her passion is hunting partridge with high flying falcons but she also fly a goshawk on crows.

Lauren McGough
USA



Lauren began falconry at age 14 in Oklahoma, USA and is a former president of the Oklahoma Falconers Association. She has long had a love of eagle and international falconry, first visiting Mongolia at age 17 and moving to Scotland at 19 to pursue eagle falconry on the moors. With an undergraduate degree in biology and experience in raptor conservation projects in the US, Europe and Asia, she is now working on her PhD in anthropology at the University of St Andrews. Lauren divides her time between flying captive-bred golden eagles on mountain hares in Scotland and passage golden eagles on foxes in Mongolia and Kazakhstan.

Tula Stapert
Holland



Tula had the best of both nature conservancy and hunting growing up in The Dutch Antilles and Holland. She is a crow falconer and for the past 20 years a member of the Dutch falconers club Adriaan Mollen. She broadened her experience by making contact with crow falconer Nick Fox who invited her to come over to Northumberland. As a result of her involvement with the past three International Falconry festivals she became a project leader for the UNESCO submission. She is an advisor of foreign affairs for the Dutch falconry museum in Valkenswaard. The estate where she works as manager is in the east part of Holland near the holy grounds of the Loo Hawking club. At the estate she is able to do some hawking, but the main hunting grounds are at the Eempolder with its typical Dutch open field. It is there Tula can pursue the historical ringing flight of the peregrine which can be enjoyed and followed.

Veronique Blontrock
Belgium



Veronique grew up in the town Bruges, in northern Belgium with her two brothers. As a young girl she had an interest in nature. She was first introduced to falconry by friends and has since been her passion. In 1996 she flew her first goshawk and is currently flying a Harris' Hawk and an American Kestrel. She has held board positions of the Belgian Falconers club Marie de Bourgogne including past president and is current secretary of the club. In 2006 she was the delegate for Belgium at the IAF general meeting. 🦅



Photo by Klaus Leix

RESCUE WORKS FOR JAPANESE BIRDS OF PREY WITH FALCONRY TECHNIQUES

By Kei-ya Nakajima

The Japan Falconiformes Center
www.wa.commufa.jp/jfc/

*Falconry is traditional hunting art.
The techniques are useful for the conservation of birds of prey.*

Introduction

In Japan, various birds of prey are specified as endangered species (e.g. Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos japonica*, Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis fujiyamae*, Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus japonensis*). They are under government control with related laws, and there are various conservation activities to improve the situation. Rescue works for injured birds of prey are also included in the activities. If released birds made the pair for breeding, the rescue works would be also effective to conserve the next generation of endangered species.

Usually, injured birds are found by the general public and they are picked up by related authorities such as the department of wildlife in prefectural office. Then, these birds are carried to suitable institutions that can manage to treat them, because most authorities don't keep the specialists and facilities for birds of prey. Therefore, falconers should be on duty for the works.

The Japan Falconiformes Center (JFC) has performed the rescue works in the central region of Japan since 1982 with falconry skills that were developed in Japan during the 18th and 19th centuries (see Fig. 1). Veterinarians also assist the works through medical examination, operation and prescriptions. Falconry equipments and facilities are used for handling, feeding and keeping and falconry skill is applied on the rehabilitation stage of recovered birds. Verification of hunting ability is effective to prevent starvation caused by the after effect of an injury after the release. Short courses for related persons are also held at the JFC to give basic information of birds of prey and the handling of injured birds.

Currently, our rescue activities with falconry skills are recognized by prefectural governments and Ministry of the Environment. The staff of the JFC are Endangered Species Conservation Promoters in Japan on the request from the Ministry of the Environment, and we have cooperative rescue works with the Aichi prefectural office since 2008.

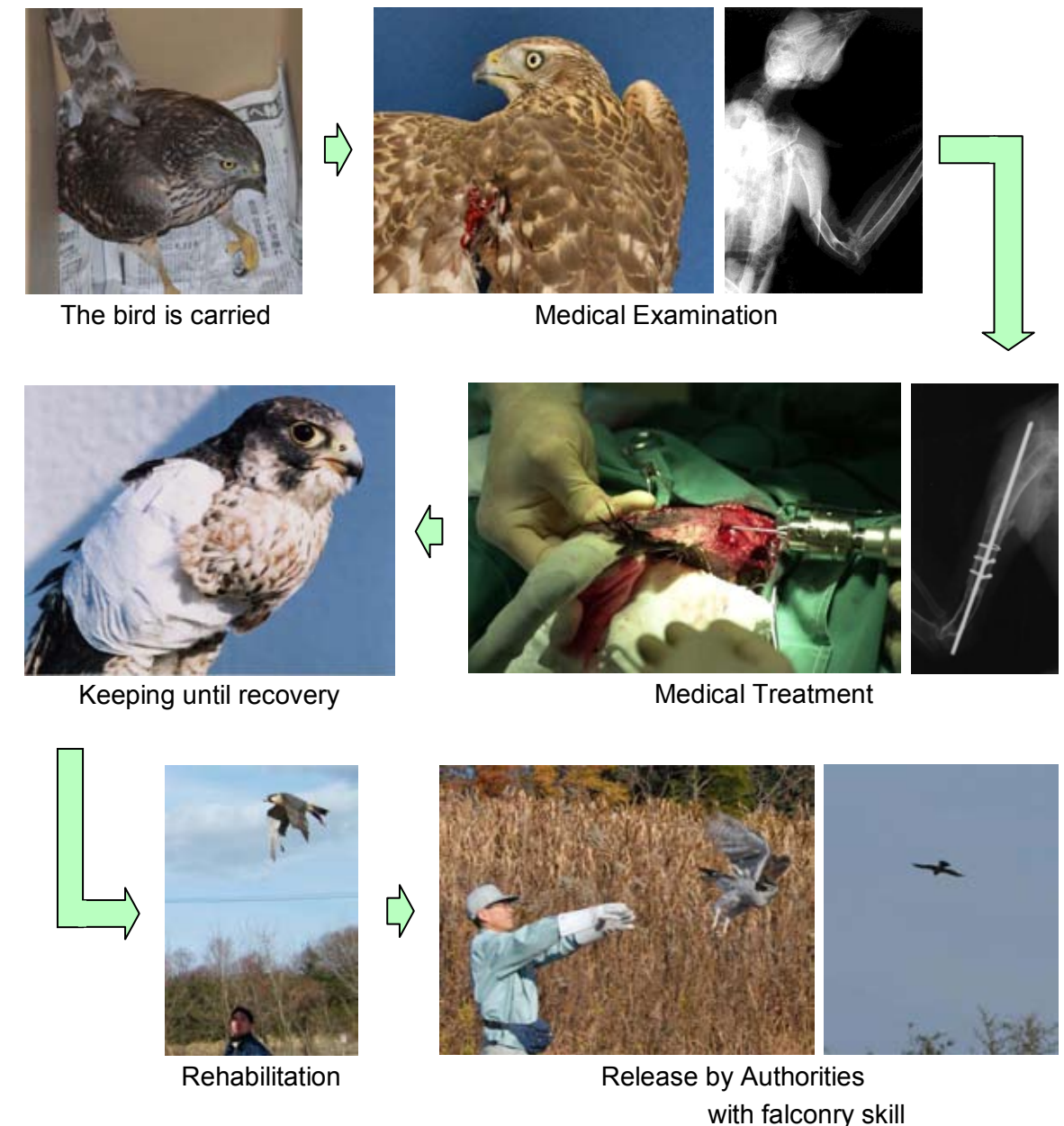


The location of the JFC and related prefectures of rescued birds.

Recent Results

We have received 65 birds in the five years from January 2007 to December 2011 from Aichi, Osaka, Nara and Wakayama prefectures. The rescued species were Northern Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon, Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*), Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*), Black kite (*Milvus migrans*), Japanese lesser Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter gularis*), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) in order of numbers (see fig. 2). Goshawk, Peregrine and Sparrowhawks are traditional birds of prey for Japanese falconry. Causes of rescue were debilitation without injury, wing fracture, bruise, wing injury, eyes, beak injury, in order of numbers (see fig. 3). The number of rescued birds increased from summer to winter, and 63% of rescued birds were juveniles (see Fig. 4).

Figure 1: the course of rescue works at the JFC.



This means that juveniles had more accidents after fledging and during their first winter, than adults. Unfortunately, 41 of 65 birds (63%) died after rescue because of severe conditions such as compound wing fractures or total debilitation. However 17 birds (26%) were returned to the nature after the recovery (see fig. 5). In the case of cooperative rescue works with Aichi prefecture, the pick up procedure was improved to reduce the time for the rescue. Before the cooperative works, the arrangement for pick up was required for each case after notice that an injured bird was found. But, the procedure was changed by cooperation works, that staff of Aichi prefecture would go to the place where the bird was found, to pick up

the injured birds after the notice, and the birds are taken to JFC immediately by the staff. By the cooperation, dead and unreleased birds were slightly decreased, and released birds were slightly increased.

The one day short course for related persons was held three times each year from 2007 - 2010. There were 79 participants from Aichi prefectural office and the Ministry of the Environment. It was a good opportunity to spread the knowledge that falconry skills are useful for the conservation works. It was also effective in preventing additional trouble at the pick up of injured birds such as change for the worse of the condition by unsuitable handling.

Figure 2: Rescued species (n=65)

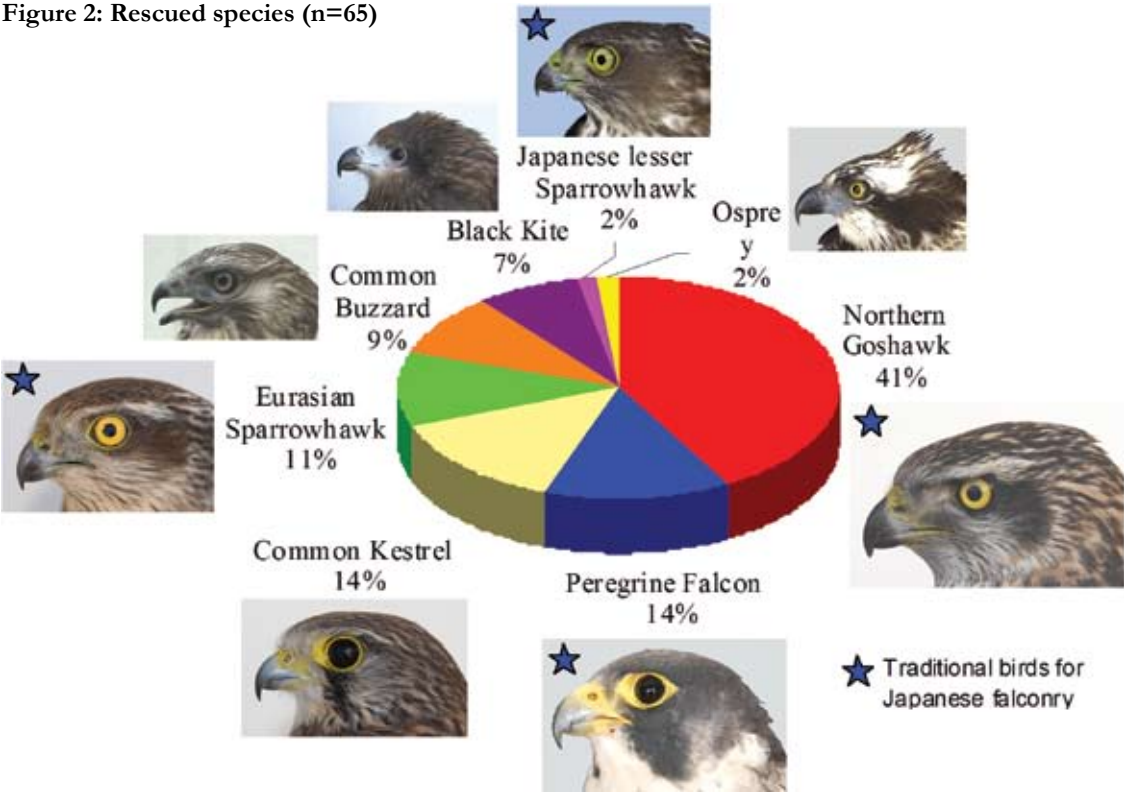
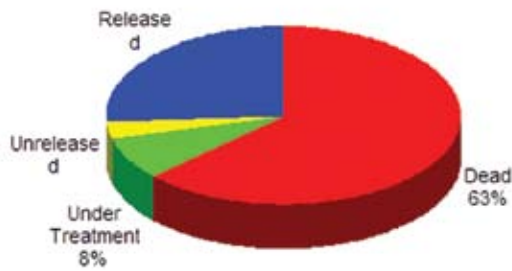


Figure 3: Condition of rescued birds (n=65)



Figure 5: Results after the rescue (n=65)



Above: Keiya Nakajima.
Below: The short courses run at the JFC



Problems to be solved

One problem is how to get the funding for the rescue works. Most people think that the related authorities prepare the budget for the rescue works of endangered species that are conserved by related laws, and that the expense for treatment is paid to working group or person in response to condition of the rescued birds. Actually, related authorities request the rescue works without budget or with a small amount that is short for the actual expenses such as medical examination, medical operation, medicine and feed. In Japan, euthanasia is not allowed for endangered species. In this case, unreleased birds by after effect are kept for a long time until the end of their life, if they are not used for another purpose such as breeding or education. Therefore, working groups or other persons must provide the expenses from private funds, membership fee, donation and grant for supplement that are not promised for every year. It is not easy to get the funding under the present economical situation in Japan. On the other hand, there is no official regulation to be a falconer in Japan. So everybody can start up as a falconer by themselves irrespective of their skill or attitude, if they want to. The registration system is also not prepared for the specialist who can keep wild birds of prey for rescue works. In 2011, some members of falconry group were arrested by poaching and illegal keeping of endangered birds of prey in Japan. Before the arrest, they said that it was

‘conservation works for birds of prey by falconers’, because one of them had a career as a rehabilitator of rescued birds of prey on the request from local government. However the actual reason was personal pleasure with a healthy goshawk and peregrine, and they understood that it was illegal. This case was introduced by media as falconer’s crime, because the arrested persons were leading members of the falconry group, such as the president. It is a bad example by self-professed falconer and has harmful effects. How do we select suitable groups or persons for the conservation works with falconry skills? It is also one of the problems which need more consideration.

Related authorities must think about these problems to be solved if they want to maintain the rescue works for the endangered birds of prey and the specialist such as the serious falconer.

THE FALCONRY AND CIGAR-MAKERS MUSEUM VALKENSWAARD 25TH ANNIVERSARY

By Ben Mondelaars

On Friday June 3rd the Falconry and Cigar-makers Museum in Valkenswaard (The Netherlands) celebrated its 25th anniversary during an official jubilee reception in the foyer of the building where the museum is housed.



Besides friends and connections of the museum many falconers, from the Netherlands as well as from other European countries, were attending the celebration. Four speakers with as guest of honour IAF president Frank Bond gave a speech of the day during this festive gathering. The speeches were followed by a song from a CD with thirteen songs written and composed especially for this jubilee by one of the volunteers of the museum.

The first speaker was the mayor of Valkenswaard, Anton Ederveen. He stated that this museum provides a valued and superb look at “almost the entire cultural history of Valkenswaard”, in which the falconry and cigar industries successively have made essential contributions to the town’s development. To any who wish to immerse themselves in the history of Valkenswaard, he said, I always recommend that they pay a visit to this museum first, with its two fascinating collections, the like of which you are not likely to encounter elsewhere. Museums dedicated to falconry and those dedicated to cigar-making are few and far between, especially since the Niemijer Tobacco Museum in Groningen closed in January of this year.

In his view it is no exaggeration to say that the Falconry and Cigar-makers Museum is authoritative, not only locally and regionally, but internationally as well, and moreover, it belongs to an exclusive, international group of specialist museums. The museum is not only informative; its role extends further than that. The trades, techniques and tools that walk hand in hand with falconry and cigar-making can only be preserved for future generations by museums such as the Valkenswaard’s Falconry and Cigar-makers Museum. After all, there are precious few falconers and cigar-makers still active and an element that he finds extremely important



From left: Anton Ederveen, Ben Mondelaars and Jac van Gerven.

is that the museum maintains ‘living’ collections. Its staff are constantly striving and working to improve the quality and accessibility of the museum; for instance, by digitising the collections, as well as through other initiatives.

Frank Bond, president of IAF, stated that the Valkenswaard Falconry and Cigar-makers Museum is the only museum of its kind in Europe. Its significance becomes even greater in the future of this historic UNESCO recognition, because the larger falconry community, has a duty to prove to UNESCO regularly that it continues to preserve and perpetuate the falconry roots, traditions, history and practice for posterity. This museum joins together men and women in the spirit of the finest falconry traditions to keep that heritage alive, even if they are not practicing falconers.

With great pride, Frank Bond said, “I am so pleased to join



Jac van Gerven.

you here for the celebration of this wonderful museum, one of the European homes of our cultural and historical tradition.” He announced that the IAF will hold its Annual General Meeting in Valkenswaard in 2013 and went on to say “I will not be the President of the IAF then, but it will be a great pleasure for me to return to Valkenswaard for what promises to be a wonderful meeting”.

After a eulogy on the smoking of cigars, Ben Mondelaars, chairman of the museum said that at a jubilee there is always a great tendency to look back, but he would like to fix the eyes on the future. A work-group is examining in which direction the Falconry Museum and the Cigar-makers Museum could and should develop so that they can catch the attention of a larger and wider public. Where heritage conservation is an important goal of the museum one can see that the heritage of falconry is developing and accepting modern forms, so it is a challenge for the museum to pay attention to these developments.

During this jubilee reception those present not only celebrated the 25th anniversary of the museum, but they also celebrated that Jac van Gerven has been the curator of the Falconry Museum during 25 years. He is what we might call the founding father of our museum. If Jac had not been there,

Valkenswaard wouldn’t have had a falconry museum at all. In 1967 he made a study of the history of Valkenswaard and concluded that the falconers of Valkenswaard have played an important role in the Netherlands as well as in Europe.

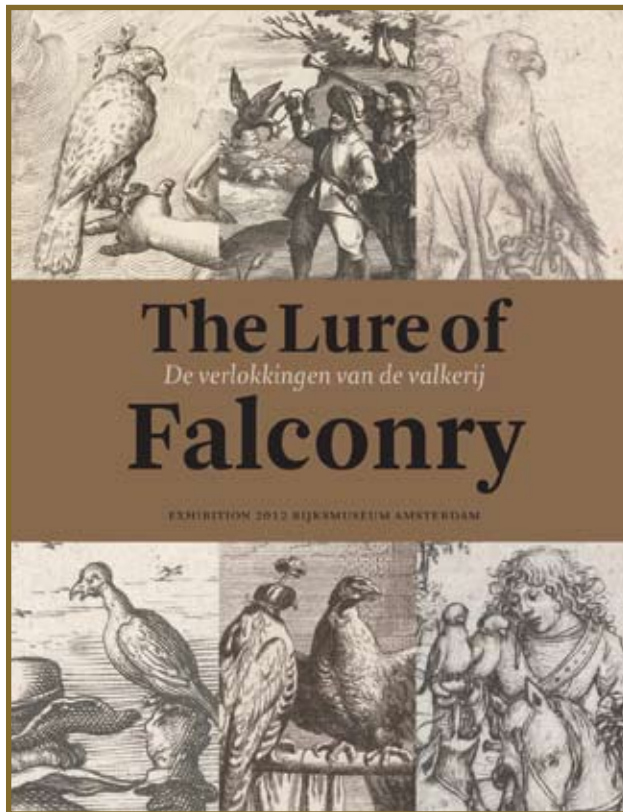
Afterwards a Society named “Unanimity” invited historian Jan van Oorschot to make a profound inquiry into the past of the falconers of Valkenswaard. So Jac van Gerven met the historian Jan van Oorschot, who, after a thorough investigation at the university of Tilburg took his PhD in 1974 on the thesis: “Royal flyers and the Valkenswaard’s falconers since the 17th century”. So the board of the museum as well as the board of the foundation friends of the museum have given serious consideration to the question how they can give Jac that place in the Falconry Museum that he merits. Finally they decided to order the painter Johan Kolman, a disciple of Slijper and a falconer himself, to paint a portrait of Jac, that they would hang in a place of honour in the Falconry Museum.

In the next years the museum has the intention to look for unique collector items from all over Europe. Recently it bought a large book scanner, with this they start to set up a digitalised database in the field of the rich history of falconry.

For more information visit www.vsmm.nl

THE LURE OF FALCONRY

In acknowledgement of UNESCO's recent recognition of falconry as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage, from 7th August to 15th October 2012 the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam will present a unique exhibition dedicated to falconry in the visual arts.



Above: The cover of the catalogue from the exhibition “The Lure of Falconry”. It is a true collectors item with 80 pages full colour high resolution images.

Below: ‘Hunting Partridge with Falcons’; Studio of Philips Galle, 1582.



The exhibition features more than 40 etchings and engravings, all belonging to the Rijksmuseum and never before exhibited, as well as falconry equipment, loaned from private owners, that illustrates the importance of falconry in past centuries and the richness of this old tradition that played such an important role both in and outside of the Netherlands.

In the exhibit's journey falconers appear, from time to time, as courtly lovers, noble saints and valiant hunters. Falconry, the art of hunting with falcons, described so memorably by Emperor Frederick II of Swabia in his treatise “De Arte Venandi cum Avibus”, was a prestigious pursuit in Medieval and Renaissance Europe, one inextricably associated with aristocratic and courtly life, being largely the province of kings and nobles. To train and care for their birds they employed professional falconers: a surprising number of those at European courts were from the Netherlands, which played a leading role in many aspects of falconry for hundreds of years, providing falcons, trainers and falconers to courts throughout Europe and beyond.



Portrait of Rembrandt with a Falcon, by unknown pupil of Rembrandt. An etching with touches of burin, from the 17th century. The falcon on the fist gives the portrait an added cachet.



Leaving for the Hunt Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet, drypoint, c.1485-1490. Falconry was often employed as a metaphor for a lover's conquest of his beloved.

The village of Valkenswaard in De Kempen, Brabant, lying on the migration route of the peregrine falcon, was for centuries a major supplier of birds of prey and falconers for all European courts.

The art of falconry has been practiced for several thousand years during which time the methods used for training and hunting with birds of prey have remained virtually unaltered, even in different times, styles and cultures. Looking closely at the pictures shown in the exhibition, it will be evident that, while the circumstances in which trained hawks are kept and flown at game have changed considerably through the ages, the essence of training and hunting with birds of prey has stayed largely intact. Many varied traditional methods have contributed in their own way to how birds of prey are used in falconry nowadays.

The accurate depiction in the drawings of clothes, falconry equipment and the hawks and falcons themselves, shown full of detail, allows us to make a journey into the past and relive the excitement of times when falconry was often a metaphor for courtship and romance and symbol of nobility.

This handsome exhibition has been realised with the precious help of Wim Pijbes, the director of the Rijksmuseum, of Jane Shoaf Turner, head of the print department, and of the curators Huygen Leeftang and Erik Hinterding, who scoured the collection for interesting and unusual works of art related to falconry subjects.

The curators have worked closely with experts from the Dutch falconry clubs, under the umbrella of the Nationaal Overleg Valkerij Organisaties (NOVO), and the Valkerij en Sigarenmakerij Museum in Valkenswaard, who helped with their great knowledge of the history and practice of the old and noble art of falconry.

To ensure that the contents of this exhibition were accessible to all falconers and enthusiasts from around the world, thanks to the enthusiastic effort of many people, a gorgeous, high quality catalogue has been published.

This publication was in part supported by generous grants from The Falconry Heritage Trust, Amvest, Houthoff Buruma, Honeybrook Animal Foods, Gemeente Valkenswaard; with special thanks to Mr. H.W. ten Bosch and many other individual contributors. Particular gratitude is owed to Harrie Knol, who wrote the essay ‘The Passion and the Beauty of the Flight’ and helped the exhibition in many other ways too.

Text drawn from the catalogue “The Lure of Falconry” by Patrizia Cimberio, Falconry Heritage Trust, Board of Directors.

We thank Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam which granted permission to publish the images. All reproduction rights are owned by the Rijksmuseum.

In Memoriam

TIMOTHY KIMMEL, PHD.



With great sadness, I announce the unexpected passing of our dear friend, Professor Timothy Kimmel. He served falconry first as a Director and later as President of the North American Falconers Association. It was during his presidency that NAFA joined the IAF. Later he became a member of the IAF Advisory Committee and served as Chairman of the Science and Conservation Working Group. Most recently he ably assisted in the last two Falconry Festivals by assembling some of the exhibits related to the role of falconers in conservation.

Tim was an avid falconer all of his adult life, hunting both longwings and shortwings. He hunted big game in many parts of the world. He leaves a legacy as through his biology students who learned of his love for raptors. We all had the pleasure of being with him during the Falconry Festival in Al Ain. The falconers of the world extend their sympathies to his family.

Frank M. Bond, President

KINYA NAKAJIMA (1932-2012)

Kinya Nakajima passed away on April 3, 2012. He was full-time staff of The Hawking Club of Japan that was established by Mr Soichiro Ohara with supporters in 1964 for the preservation of Japanese traditional falconry and the conservation of native birds of prey with falconry skill. The Hawking Club of Japan was expanded to The Japan Falconiformes Center (JFC) at 1982. Kinya Nakajima had continued his works as vice president of JFC. He had spent a time for almost 50 years with birds of prey. I think that he had lived his life to the full.

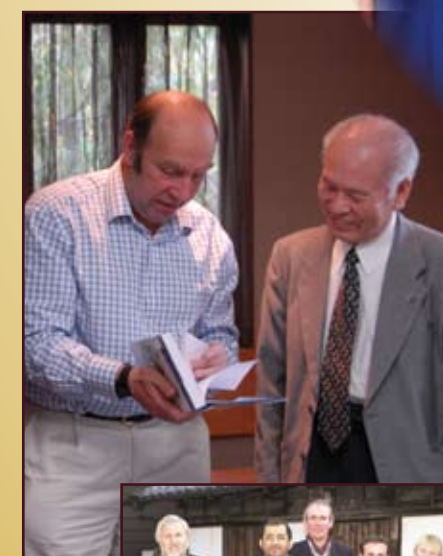
He had a lot of opportunities since 1973 to see the situation of falconry and conservation works for birds of prey in overseas. He had visited to Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Mongolia, Pakistan, Qatar, UAE, UK and USA for the IAF meeting, field meeting by national club, conference for birds of prey, field research, visit to institute and so on. He also had made a lot of good relationships with experts in the world. The experiences were very useful to learn the tradition in each country, difference of falconry style by each culture and the latest result of various researches or activities. And, the knowledge had been put to practical use to think about

what is best way to preserve Japanese falconry with native birds of prey and how to conserve the endangered species in Japan. In Japan, there is no official regulation or position for falconry and falconer. Japanese falconry is not prohibited, but it is not promoted under the related law. Traditional birds of prey for Japanese falconry (Northern Goshawk, Peregrine etc.) are conserved as endangered species in Japan. We cannot use them for private falconry. Official license system to be falconer is also not prepared. If Japanese falconers can get good understanding from the general public and government by their distinguished services for native birds of prey, Japanese falconry would be promoted with respect for the activities under the official regulation to use native birds of prey same as old times that falconry was performed actively with traditional manner by ruling class in Japan. It was his goal to develop the Japanese falconry at current situation. Unfortunately, his plan is not achieved at the moment. But, his policy is taken over next generation.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to all persons who could meet Kinya Nakajima for your kindness to my father.

Keiya Nakajima

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF KINYA NAKAJIMA



The IAF AGM and International Festival of Falconry 2011

