

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FALCONRY



## 2017

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FALCONRY AND CONSERVATION OF BIRDS OF PREY

MEMBER OF IUCN

# 4<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Falconry



مهرجان الصداقة  
الدولي الرابع  
للبيزرة

4 - 9 December

2017

4 - 9 ديسمبر

From 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> December 2017, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (may God protect him), the Abu Dhabi Cultural Programs and Heritage Festivals Committee will host the 2017 International Festival of Falconry.

The Festival's theme is Youth.

"It is our task to pass on the art of falconry to the youth, securing the transfer of our unique falconry tradition and practice on to the next generation."

Come and join up to 500 young falconers, experts, researchers and officials from over 80 countries, including representatives from UNESCO and other international organizations working for the preservation of falconry and the protection of the environment.

Meet young falconers from every continent to exchange hunting stories and share experience.

An exciting program of activities in the desert from 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> December includes practical workshops on everything from raptor health and conservation, to falconry art and photography, to hoodmaking, fieldcraft, lure work, and much more.

Daily hunting trips will bring Arabian falconry to life. Regional and topical discussion sessions will look at strategies for preserving falconry. An academic conference hosted by New York University Abu Dhabi will take place on 5<sup>th</sup> December.

A public festival on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> December will include children's activities, demonstrations and displays, national and themed tents with falconers in national dress, and practical workshops on all aspects of the art and practice of falconry.

The International Festival of Falconry is an occasion for exchange and dialogue between civilizations and cultures, and offers a rare platform for the gathering of people – like you – with a special interest in falconry.

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## ANTHONY CROSSWELL: TRIBUTE TO THE FOUNDING EDITOR

*by Dick ten Bosch*

*I*t was with sincere regret that the team of the International Journal of Falconry of the IAF recently learned that their editor, Anthony Crosswell, after many years of leading the publication, had decided to resign his position.

Anthony, a former president of the British Falconers' Club (BFC), became involved with the IAF in the 1990s, while working with BFC president Anthony Jack. Subsequently, he was a member of the team helping Christian de Coune reorganize the IAF. As a member of the North American Falconers Association (NAFA), and a good friend of Frank Bond, he was able to do some of the bridge-building necessary at that time, and took part in the group which met in Brussels to design a new IAF constitution. Frank's involvement with the IAF eventually led to NAFA joining the Association, the fulfilment of Christian de Coune's long-held goal.

After this period, Anthony became the IAF's first executive secretary, a position in which he served under four presidents: Christian de Coune, Ferrante Pratesi, Patrick Morel and Frank Bond. In those years membership started to grow rapidly. Ever more influential, our association became an international

body recognized and respected by governments, other international organizations and conservation entities worldwide. When Frank Bond became president, Anthony decided to retire as executive secretary but agreed to stay on to change the Newsletter and create a new publication: The International Journal of Falconry. As editor, his numerous contacts with falconers worldwide was a huge help in the success of this publication. Anthony can look back at his twenty-year involvement with the IAF with great satisfaction.

Early last year, I had the privilege of visiting Anthony and his wife in Norfolk and having a very long talk about falconry, books and prints, and falconers from all over the world. It was a wonderful day and a pleasure to meet him in person.

On behalf of the Editorial Committee of the IAF, and especially the other members of the Journal team, Sue Cecchini and Adrian Lombard, I wish Anthony the very best of luck. We want to express our sincere thanks for his important achievements, especially where the publications of the IAF are concerned. We hope to stay in touch and, wherever possible, to continue to benefit from his long and valuable experience and knowledge of international falconry.

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**48th Annual IAF Council of Delegates Meeting  
Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan  
3-9 September 2017**



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## Cover picture

*Lord of the High Ground* painting by Andrew Ellis depicting Golden Eagle

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Dick ten Bosch



## Editors' Foreword

*We* have really enjoyed working on and producing this year's IAF Journal, and we are so grateful for all the support with articles, photos, and artwork from falconers all over the world. It was truly an honor to work with Tony Crosswell on the IAF Journal these last two years, and we all owe him a huge debt of gratitude for elevating the IAF Journal to such a magnificent publication which proudly represents our organization. Since this is the Journal for the IAF, it is important to represent all the falconry organizations around the world in our publication. It can be difficult and challenging to create a magazine that appeals to everyone; some prefer all hunting articles while others enjoy the historical articles describing how falconry has evolved in the various regions of the world. The IAF Journal can be a source of information about falconry and conservation efforts, or it can be a place where we remember falconers who have made a great impact on our sport and our lives.

This year we have an excellent article and photos of the Houbara breeding/recovery project in the MENA region, as well as an article about the Mohammed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School highlighting the important efforts to teach children the traditions of falconry. From Europe, we have an article describing lark hawking with Merlins, as well as an article with several perspectives on snipe hawking in Ireland, then off to Poland for some partridge hunting. In the US, we are treated to the excitement of flying

Merlins at large flocks of starling, and grouse hawking in Wyoming. Several authors take us back in history to explore the old traditions of falconry as described in many priceless books and manuscripts, and we are treated to the history and artistic beauty of traditional Chinese falconry equipment. Hunting in Kazakhstan is beautifully described in an article and accompanied by some magnificent paintings, and falconers in Malta share some good news about the new falconry laws for their country. The African Crowned Eagle is explored through falconry perspectives, biology and anthropology, and the numerous efforts and events that occur each year on World Falconry Day have been compiled into an article.

Creating and publishing the IAF Journal takes time and effort, but we can't do it without your articles, photos, and paintings. Please consider sending in an article for the 2018 IAF Journal; not all of us will get to experience falconry in every region of the world, but through your articles and pictures we all can learn and enjoy how our sport is practiced in different countries. We come from different backgrounds and countries but we are all falconers.

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# A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Adrian Lombard*

*President - International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey.*



*The* IAF continues to grow in stature and in its capacity to represent the interests of falconers around the world. We now represent falconry organizations from 86 nations and have a growing relevance to falconers in every corner of the earth. Falconry is a remarkable practice and shows a maturity, as one would expect from an entity with a 4000-year history, in rejoicing our differences but also recognizing the shared experience of every falconer who creates a hunting partnership with a raptor.

The IAF is undergoing a dramatic transition from an organization which represented eight founder nations in 1968 to what is, in terms of global footprint, the largest sustainable-use organization in the world. To cope with this growth, we now have four regional Vice-Presidencies – Europe, Southern Africa, and Oceania; the Americas; the MENA Region; and Asia. The establishment of these Vice-Presidencies ensures that the IAF can represent falconers more effectively

and address regional issues. The Brussels office is now established. The capacity of the IAF has been increased through the employment of additional staff who manage the Brussels office as well as a number of special projects. We are developing a joint project with the Falconry Heritage Trust and welcome the able assistance of Jevgeni Shergalin who is helping to establish the Cultural Routes project. We also welcome Omar Fouad Ahmad who is the Executive Officer for the MENA Region.

It is the policy of the IAF to represent hunting falconers and to promote their interests in the areas of conservation, culture and animal welfare. To this end we have a range of projects and programs. My aim here is not to list these or try to discuss all of them. Information on our activities is provided elsewhere in this publication as well as on our website, on Facebook, and in our Newsletter and eBulletins. I would, however, like to bring attention to a number of areas where we are active and which hold importance for us.

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### The Peregrine and CITES

Last year, my comment focused on the restoration of the Peregrine falcon and we rejoiced the successful restoration of the species and the considerable role played by falconers in this effort. Canada applied for down-listing of the species from Appendix I to II at CITES and the IAF gave support to this effort. In the event, the call failed, largely as a result of a pre-determined decision by the European Union to oppose this application. The IAF has now held a high-level meeting with representatives of the European Union CITES Office. I have provided the following statement to introduce this meeting:

“The IAF shares global concerns relating to the increasing and lucrative trade in endangered species which is adversely affecting the conservation status of many species. The IAF recognizes the essential role of CITES in the control and management of this trade and has worked to contribute to these efforts. The IAF also affirms that the role of CITES is to manage and not to prevent the global trade in plants and animals. In many cases, livelihoods and cultural practices rely on this trade. Similarly, there are instances where trade in or use of a species may be of benefit to the conservation of that species. This understanding is recognized by the Convention on Biological Diversity which sees sustainable use as one of the pillars to support conservation of biodiversity.

In order for CITES to fulfil its role in controlling and managing trade in endangered species it is necessary that the mechanisms that govern its work be adequately flexible so that endangered species may gain the protection which they require but, also, that species which are not endangered are not afforded excessive protection. Excessive protection can result in the wastage of scarce resources, devalue the status of truly endangered species, prevent the species from reasonably sustaining livelihoods and, in specific circumstances, jeopardize conservation efforts for that species. It is incumbent on the parties to CITES to ensure that adequate consideration is given to each and every decision made by that convention. The advice of significant conservation NGOs must be given adequate consideration and the pressures from vociferous anti-use groups must be examined with caution. We have to rely on the collective wisdom of the parties to CITES to ensure that this convention remains an effective, respected and valued conservation tool.

The European Union (EU) plays a particularly dominant role within CITES. It carries the weight of 27 national votes as well as a vote accorded to it as a separate party. Coupled to this, many nations will provide their votes to support any specific stance taken by the EU in the hope that it may in turn support their causes. With this power goes great responsibility. Any decision supported by the EU must be considered in light of this power and must be balanced against the reasonable expectations of expert conservation organizations. Similarly, there must be concern where decisions are taken, immutably, prior to the discussion of presentations at the Congress of the Parties.

The decision by the European Union to vote against the proposal by Canada to down-list the Peregrine falcon, *Falco peregrinus*, remains inexplicable to us. This species underwent a dramatic population collapse in the 1950s and 60s as a result of organochlorine pesticides. Although the collapse had nothing to do with trade, it was up-listed to CITES Appendix I, quite reasonably, because, at that time, trade in the species may have imperilled its survival. A massive global conservation effort, led by falconers, has resulted in its restoration. It is now listed on the IUCN Red List as “of Least Concern”. Falconers and other conservationists wish to see the species down-listed as a celebration of this conservation success. This was denied to us at the CITES CoP 17.

With great power goes great responsibility. Within the democratic societies to which we aspire, this responsibility must be scrutinized and decisions reviewed. We ask that a respectful consideration be given to reviewing this decision. This is a decision which does little to support the conservation of the Peregrine falcon or the respect which CITES requires to perform its duty as the controller of global trade in endangered species and act as an effective conservation body.”

Following this meeting, we have a greater understanding of the attitude and considerations of the European Union in this regard. We remain committed to seeing the down-listing of this species and we have a strategy to take the plans for this forward.



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### The Saker and sustainable use

To many falconers, the Saker falcon is a species around which their falconry activity revolves. It is synonymous with falconry in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula and is important to the practice of falconry in parts of North Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. Declines in some populations of this species across its extensive range resulted in up-listing of the species under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) from Appendix II to I in 2011. The initial concern was that these declines were the result of unsustainable use but work by falconers demonstrated that there were other more significant causes for this which include electrocution and habitat change. Indeed, the successful artificial nest project in Mongolia demonstrated that sustainable use projects of this nature could benefit the species. In light of this, CMS made a significant provision that the Mongolian population would remain in Appendix II and that other populations could be down-listed if similar conservation projects allowing for sustainable use are undertaken. Subsequently the Raptors Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of CMS, to which the IAF is one of three Co-operating Partners, established the Saker Task Force which produced the Saker Global Action Plan (Saker GAP). This plan envisaged a number of Flagship Projects to conserve the species.

The first of these projects was the "Portal to Enhance Trust". This involves a multilingual internet portal designed for access by smartphones and available in the languages of those involved in the use of this species: Arabic, Russian, Pashtu and Farsi. The purpose of the portal is to establish contact with those using the species, to establish their attitudes and observations and to provide some information encouraging sustainable use. Phase I was funded, primarily, by the IAF and instituted in partnership with BirdLife International, CMS/UNEP and IUCN. It has achieved significant success reaching over 4000 users and is a unique effort to measure and contribute to sustainable use of a species.

The second project involves the placing of 100 satellite trackers on fledgling Saker falcons which will be used to track their dispersal from nesting grounds and monitor their fates. This project was, once again, initiated by the IAF with funding support from the Al-Gannas Society of Qatar. Ten trackers were placed on eyas birds in southern Russia. Initial results are disturbing in that four have disappeared and, while we await further results, we know that two of these birds were taken by

trappers and that this has led to arrests of two groups of illegal trappers. We plan to continue this effort and now have funding support from the Emirates Falconers' Club to place a further ten trackers on eyasses in the coming season.

The third project is the establishment of a second artificial nest program which could well result in the development of another area allowing a sustainable harvest.

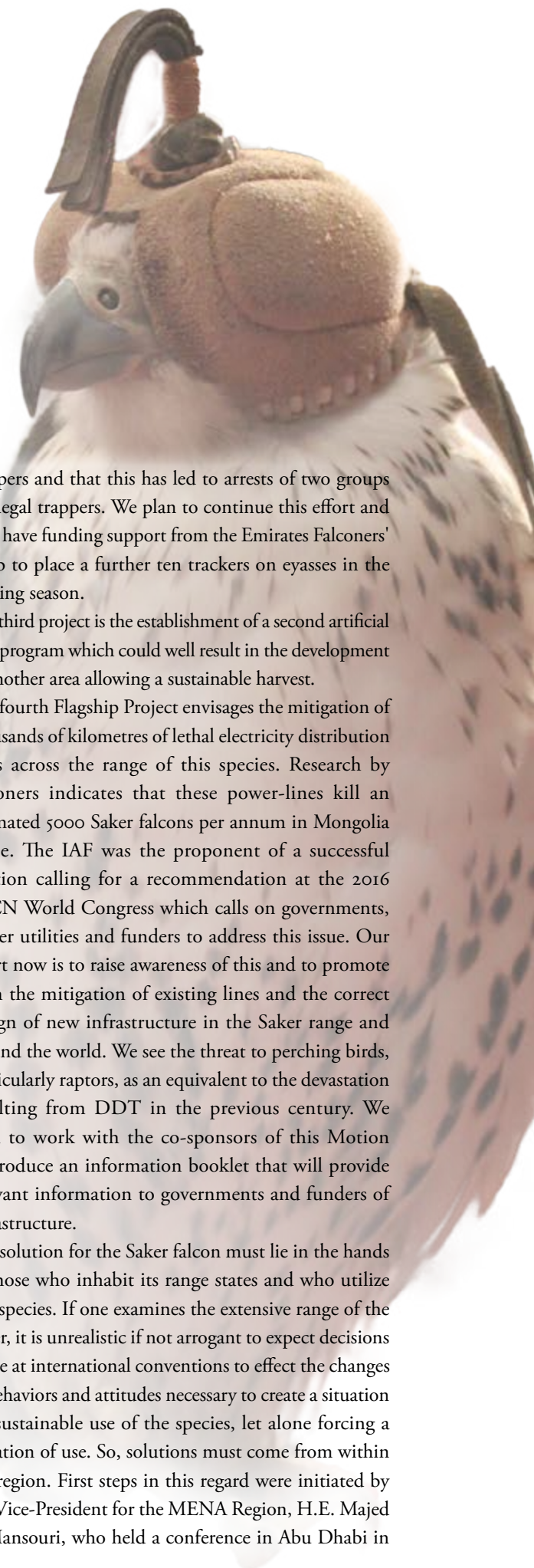
The fourth Flagship Project envisages the mitigation of thousands of kilometres of lethal electricity distribution lines across the range of this species. Research by falconers indicates that these power-lines kill an estimated 5000 Saker falcons per annum in Mongolia alone. The IAF was the proponent of a successful Motion calling for a recommendation at the 2016 IUCN World Congress which calls on governments, power utilities and funders to address this issue. Our effort now is to raise awareness of this and to promote both the mitigation of existing lines and the correct design of new infrastructure in the Saker range and around the world. We see the threat to perching birds, particularly raptors, as an equivalent to the devastation resulting from DDT in the previous century. We plan to work with the co-sponsors of this Motion to produce an information booklet that will provide relevant information to governments and funders of infrastructure.

The solution for the Saker falcon must lie in the hands of those who inhabit its range states and who utilize this species. If one examines the extensive range of the Saker, it is unrealistic if not arrogant to expect decisions made at international conventions to effect the changes in behaviors and attitudes necessary to create a situation for sustainable use of the species, let alone forcing a cessation of use. So, solutions must come from within the region. First steps in this regard were initiated by the Vice-President for the MENA Region, H.E. Majed al Mansouri, who held a conference in Abu Dhabi in


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September 2016, to develop “A Strategy for Falconry in the MENA Region”. This seminal conference involved falconers and researchers from the region and looked to identify and address challenges to falconry in that region. Arising from this conference, a second one was held on 25th April 2017: “Combating Illegal Trade in Falcons in the Middle East and North Africa”. The IAF plans to follow up on this effort with a conference to address sustainable use of the Saker falcon in conjunction with our AGM in the Kyrgyz Republic in September 2017. This conference should be organized under the auspices of the Saker Task Force of CMS and facilitated by the IAF. The hope is to bring together representatives of the conservation authorities of the Gulf region as well as Central Asia, falconers and conservationists. We have a unique opportunity to look at measures which can address conservation issues faced by the Saker and which can be used to implement a legal, measurable and sustainable trade in this species. In this way we can ensure access for falconers to a sustainable harvest of this species into the future. Admittedly this is an ambitious effort but success is built on dreams and achieved one step at a time. As with the Peregrine, the survival of this species will rely on the efforts of falconers.

### **The Perdix Portal**

By the time this comment is published, the Perdix Portal will be launched. The concept of this Portal was discussed in the last edition of the IAF Journal and represents a very significant contribution by falconers, through the IAF, to the conservation of biodiversity. Across Europe, we have seen an intensification in agriculture. Huge acreages of monoculture now cover the land. The hedgerows and fallow ground which used to support biodiversity are gone. Herbicides ensure that there are no weeds and efficient insecticides ensure that there are no insects. Effectively, the croplands become deserts which create a product to feed humans or livestock or to be used as biofuel. The Grey Partridge, *Perdix perdix*, once the predominant quarry for falconers and wing-shooters in Europe, has experienced a population crash through loss of cover in which to breed and insects with which to feed its chicks. This species can be seen as a sentinel for all the other common species of birds, mammals, insects and even plants which are being devastated in this process. We know that this process can be reversed by relatively

simple changes to the environment. To promote this, the IAF – in partnership with the UK-based Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and the IUCN Sustainable Use and Management of the Environment (SUME) specialist group – have developed the Perdix Portal. This Portal is based around a central website [www.perdixnet.org](http://www.perdixnet.org) with national sites in national languages. It aims to provide information and create a partnership between hunters, landowners, farmers, beekeepers and others who are interested in restoring biodiversity. This is an important “bottom-up” approach to address the problem through mobilizing citizens on the ground. Once again, falconers are leading the effort. The EU has set a target to halt biodiversity loss by 2020 and here is a project which is capable of effectively addressing this issue.

### **IAF-managed Stud Books for falconry raptors**

Falconry remains one of the few instances where an activity based around captive-bred animals is not supported by independently managed Stud Books and the provision of pedigrees which demonstrate the blood-line of progeny for purchase. It would be reasonable to anticipate that, with maturity of our captive breeding industry, purchasers should require documentation of the breeding of the bird which they purchase, confirmation that a bird is of a particular subspecies or is pure-bred and, above all, is legitimate. The IAF is well placed to act as the independent agency which is capable of collating breeders’ records and providing pedigrees for the birds which they produce. These pedigrees can be based on species or sub-species (for example with the red-naped shahin) and could demonstrate lines such as “Scottish peregrines”. The fees generated by this service to falconry could provide essential funding to ensure the continued representation of falconry by the IAF. While we acknowledge that this service may be controversial, it is a win-win project for falconers where they receive valuable documentation for any birds purchased and contribute to the survival of their representative advocacy organization – the IAF. There are two important aspects to this project which require further elucidation:

1. CITES, as a result of a proposal by the UAE supported by the IAF, recognizes the principle of Falconry Passports which can be provided to a falconry raptor which has tamper-proof marking and which will allow multiple cross-border transportation. The provision of

pedigrees and appropriate negotiation would enable the effective development of these passports. This may be of importance, for example, for the transport of birds between the EU and the UK following Brexit.

2. This project could also be managed in conjunction with the “Mark and Bank” system proposed by the IAF to prevent the laundering of illegal birds into the legitimate trade of captive-bred birds. This system relies on tamper-proof marking of birds (ring or micro-chip) as well as the banking of DNA material (feather). This principle will be applied for the pilot project for the IAF Stud Book which will involve the European Bonelli’s Eagle.

The issue of the Bonelli’s Eagle in Europe is one which has encouraged criticism of falconry and which was first brought to our attention in 2013. Every year eyas Bonelli’s eagles are poached from a population of these birds which is thriving in Sicily. A number of these birds have been recovered while they are being smuggled north out of Italy. We do not know where the destination of these birds may be, but conservationists in Italy are convinced that falconers are to blame. The IAF has commissioned and funded a research project to develop the capacity for the forensic identification of Bonelli’s eagles and to enable identification of their parentage. We can then create a managed stud book for the legitimate breeders of this species and couple this with the banking of DNA material from Bonelli’s eagles in captivity. This will protect the breeders from criticism, ensure that purchasers are getting legitimate birds, and address a significant wildlife crime which is bringing falconry into disrepute.

We hope that this Stud Book will be strongly supported by all falconers as, apart from being a valuable service to them, it can provide the essential funding to ensure the continued existence of our organization in the future.

### **The future of falconry**

In keeping with the concepts of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the continued practice of falconry depends on the youth and it

is the responsibility of established falconers to foster the young and encourage their participation. The IAF Young Falconers and IAF Women’s Working Groups have taken on this role. In a joint project they prepared the IAF participation in World Wildlife Day where the theme was to encourage youth involvement in conservation. Their collaboration resulted in a most attractive sketch video showing the involvement of falconers in conservation. Their remarkable achievement was that this video was viewed by over 75,000 people. We have also seen initiation of the Young Falconers eNewsletter, prepared by the Women’s Working Group. The talent and enthusiasm within these groups leaves me with no concern for the future of the IAF.

The 4th International Festival of Falconry will be held in Abu Dhabi in December this year. It will be considerably different from previous festivals. The focus of the festival is on the development of young falconers and the future leadership of falconry. The falconers who have been invited will represent the youth of their nations and activities will be aimed at increasing their falconry skills and knowledge of falconry issues. Most of the festival will take place in the desert to give youngsters an experience of the desert and Bedouin falconry. Above all, this will be a wonderful opportunity for youngsters to broaden their knowledge and create friendships with others from around the world. What an amazing opportunity!

### **Finally:**

There remain a host of issues which could be covered and individuals and organizations whose contributions to our effort deserve mention. This Comment cannot be comprehensive. Much is being done to advance falconry as a dynamic living art and to encourage acceptance of a practice which is poorly understood by the general public, by governments and even by conservation organizations. We are making real headway with broader acknowledgement and recognition. Considerable challenges lie ahead if we are to pass on our practice to future generations. Each and every falconer has a role to play in this effort. However, as falconers, you can also have the confidence that you have dynamic and competent representation to maintain your art.





# كلمة رئيس الاتحاد

أدريان لومبارد

رئيس الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة

يستمر الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة في النمو و ترقية مكانته وتطوير قدرته على تمثيل مصالح الصقارين في جميع أنحاء العالم. نحن الآن نمثل منظمات الصقارين من 86 دولة وأصبحت لدينا أهمية متزايدة للصقارين في كل ركن من أركان الأرض. الصقارة ممارسة متميزة وناضجة، وهذا ما يمكن توقعه من كيان يستند إلى تاريخ يمتد إلى 4000 سنة، بكل ما فيه من تنوع وخبرات مشتركة يساهم فيها كل صقار يدخل في هذه الشراكة الفريدة من نوعها مع طير جارح .

لقد مر الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة بمرحلة تحول دراماتيكية من منظمة تمثل 8 دول مؤسسة في عام 1968 إلى ما هو عليه الآن من حيث التأثير العالمي، ليغدو أكبر منظمة للاستخدام المستدام في العالم. ولما كبة هذا النمو، أصبح لدينا الآن 4 نواب إقليميين للرئيس - أوروبا وجنوب أفريقيا وأوقيانوسيا، والأمريكيتان، ومنطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا، وآسيا. ويضمن استحداث مناصب نواب الرئيس أن يتمكن الاتحاد من تمثيل الصقارة على نحو أكثر فعالية ومعالجة القضايا الإقليمية. وقد أنشئ مكتب بروكسل الآن. وزادت قدرات الاتحاد من خلال توظيف موظفين إضافيين يديرون مكتب بروكسل فضلا عن عدد من المشاريع الخاصة. ونعمل على إنشاء مشروع مشترك مع صندوق تراث الصقارة، ونرحب بالمساعدة من جيفجيني شيرغالين الذي يساعد على إنشاء مشروع المسارات الثقافية. كما نرحب بعمر فؤاد أحمد الذي يشغل منصب المدير التنفيذي لمنطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا.

وتتمثل سياسة الاتحاد في تمثيل الصقارين وتعزيز مصالحهم في مجالات الحفظ والثقافة ورعاية الحيوان. ولهذه الغاية لدينا مجموعة من المشاريع والبرامج. ولا أهداف هنا إلى حصر هذه المشاريع أو محاولة مناقشة كل منها، حيث يتم توفير معلومات عن أنشطتنا في مكان آخر من هذه المطبوعة وكذلك على موقعنا على شبكة الإنترنت، وفي الفيس بوك، ولدينا النشرة الإخبارية والبريد الإلكتروني. بيد أنني أود أن ألفت الانتباه إلى عدد من المجالات التي نعمل فيها والتي لها أهمية خاصة بالنسبة إلينا.

## الشاهين والسائيس:

في العام الماضي، ركز تعليقي على استعادة صقر الشاهين، فقد فرحنا بالنجاح في استعادة هذا النوع والدور الكبير الذي لعبه الصقارون في هذا الجهد. وقد تقدمت كندا بطلب للحصول على خفض تصنيف النوع من الملحق الأول إلى الثاني في اتفاقية الإتجار الدولي بالحيوانات والنباتات البرية المهددة بالانقراض (سائيس)، وقدم الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة الدعم لهذا الجهد. وتعود أسباب هذه الدعوة بدرجة كبيرة إلى قرار محدد مسبقا من قبل الاتحاد الأوروبي لمعارضة هذا الطلب. وقد عقد الاتحاد اجتماعا رفيع المستوى مع ممثلي مكتب الاتحاد الأوروبي لاتفاقية سائيس. وتم إلقاء البيان التالي للتقديم لهذا الاجتماع:

"يشارك الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة في الاهتمامات العالمية المتعلقة بالتجارة المتزايدة والمربحة في الأنواع المهددة بالانقراض، مما يؤثر سلبا على حالة حفظ العديد من الأنواع. ويعترف الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة بالدور الأساسي للاتفاقية في السيطرة على هذه التجارة وإدارتها، ويعمل على المساهمة في هذه الجهود. ويؤكد الاتحاد أيضا أن دور الاتفاقية هو إدارة التجارة العالمية في النباتات والحيوانات وليس منعها. وفي كثير من الحالات، تعتمد سبل العيش والممارسات الثقافية على هذه التجارة. وبالمثل، هناك حالات قد تكون فيها التجارة في الأنواع أو استخدامها مفيدة للمحافظة على تلك الأنواع. وهذا الفهم معترف به في اتفاقية التنوع البيولوجي التي تعتبر الاستخدام المستدام أحد الركائز لدعم حفظ التنوع البيولوجي.

ولكي تتمكن الاتفاقية من القيام بدورها في السيطرة على التجارة في الأنواع المهددة بالانقراض وإدارتها، من الضروري أن تكون الآليات التي تحكم عملها مرنة بما فيه الكفاية حتى تتمكن الأنواع المهددة بالانقراض من الحصول على الحماية التي تحتاجها، ولكن أيضا، ألا يتم منح حماية مفرطة للأنواع التي لا تتعرض للخطر. ويمكن أن تؤدي الحماية المفرطة إلى هدر الموارد الشحيحة وتدهور حالة الأنواع المهددة بالانقراض ومنع الأنواع من الإسهام في استدامة سبل العيش بصورة معقولة، وأيضاً في ظروف محددة، يمكن تعريض جهود الحفاظ على تلك الأنواع للخطر. ويتعين على الأطراف في اتفاقية التجارة الدولية بالحيوانات والنباتات البرية المهددة بالانقراض أن تولي اعتباراً كافياً لكل قرار يصدر عن الاتفاقية. ويجب إيلاء اهتمام خاص لنصيحة المنظمات غير الحكومية المعنية بالحفظ، مع النظر بحذر في ضغوط



الجماعات المناهضة للاستخدام. وعلينا أن نعتد على الحكمة الجماعية للأطراف في اتفاقية التجارة الدولية بالحيوانات والنباتات البرية المهددة بالانقراض لضمان أن تظل هذه الاتفاقية أداة فعالة ومحترمة وقيمة للمحافظة على التنوع البيولوجي.

ويؤدي الاتحاد الأوروبي دوراً مهماً بشكل خاص في إطار الاتفاقية. وهو يحمل وزن 27 صوتاً وطنياً وكذلك تصويتاً يمنح للاتحاد الأوروبي كطرف مستقل. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، ستقدم العديد من الدول أصواتها لدعم أي موقف محدد يتخذه على أمل أن يوافق الاتحاد الأوروبي بدوره على قضاياها. تترتب على هذه السلطة مسؤولية كبيرة. وأي قرار يؤيده الاتحاد الأوروبي يجب أن ينظر إليه في ضوء هذه السلطة ويجب موازنته مع التوقعات المعقولة لمنظمات الحفظ المتخصصة. وبالمثل، يجب أن يكون هناك اهتمام ثابت عند صدور القرارات قبل مناقشة العروض في مؤتمر الأطراف.

ولا يزال قرار الاتحاد الأوروبي بالتصويت ضد اقتراح كندا بخفض تصنيف صقر الشاهين، أمراً لا يمكن تفسيره بالنسبة إلينا. وقد خضع هذا النوع لانحياز كبير في الخمسينيات والستينيات نتيجة لمبيدات الآفات العضوية الكلورية. وعلى الرغم من أن ذلك الانحياز لم يكن له علاقة بالتجارة، إلا أن كان سبباً معقولاً في إدراج الشاهين في الملحق الأول من اتفاقية التجارة الدولية بالحيوانات والنباتات البرية المهددة بالانقراض، لأنه في ذلك الوقت، كان من الممكن أن تؤدي التجارة في هذا النوع إلى تعريض بقائه للخطر. وقد نجحت جهود حفظ عالمية ضخمة بقيادة الصقارين في استعادة هذا النوع، وهو مدرج الآن في القائمة الحمراء للاتحاد الدولي لحفظ الطبيعة والموارد الطبيعية بوصفه في وضع يتطلب الحد الأدنى من القلق. ويأمل الصقارون وغيرهم من المهتمين بالحفاظ على البيئة في خفض تصنيف الأنواع المدرجة في القائمة كاحتقال بهذا النجاح في مجال الحفظ. وقد حررنا هذا الأمر في مؤتمر العمل السابع عشر لاتفاقية التجارة الدولية بالحيوانات والنباتات البرية المهددة بالانقراض.

مع القوة الكبيرة تأتي المسؤولية الكبيرة. وفي إطار المجتمعات الديمقراطية التي نتطلع إليها، يجب التدقيق في هذه المسؤولية ومراجعة القرارات. ونطلب أن يولى الاعتبار الواجب لمراجعة هذا القرار. وهذا قرار لا يفعل سوى القليل للحفاظ على صقر الشاهين ولا يدعم الاحترام الذي يجب أن تحظى به اتفاقية التجارة الدولية بالحيوانات والنباتات البرية المهددة بالانقراض لأداء واجبها كمراقب للتجارة العالمية في الأنواع المهددة بالانقراض والعمل كهيئة حماية فعالة.

وفي أعقاب هذا الاجتماع، أصبح لدينا تفهم أكبر لموقف ومبررات الاتحاد الأوروبي في هذا الصدد. ولا تزال ملتزمين برؤية خفض تصنيف هذا النوع في قوائم السابيتس ولدينا استراتيجية لوضع خطط للمضي قدماً في هذا المسعى.

#### الصقر الحر والاستخدام المستدام:

بالنسبة للكثير من الصقارين، فإن الصقر الحر هو نوع محوري في الصيد بالصقور. وهو النوع المعتاد من الصقور في الخليج وشبه الجزيرة العربية، وله أهمية بالغة في الصقارة في أجزاء واسعة من شمال أفريقيا وآسيا وأوروبا الشرقية. وأدى الانخفاض الذي حدث في أعداد هذا النوع عبر نطاقه الواسع إلى رفع تصنيفه في اتفاقية الأنواع المهاجرة من الملحق الثاني إلى الأول في عام 2011. وكان مصدر القلق الأول هو الانخفاضات التي كانت نتيجة للاستخدام غير المستدام، ولكن أظهر عمل الصقارين أن هناك أسباباً أخرى أكثر أهمية، تشمل الصعق بالكهرباء وتغيير الموائل. وفي الواقع، أثبت مشروع الأعشاش الاصطناعية الناجح في منغوليا أن مشاريع الاستخدام المستدام لهذا النوع يمكن أن تفيد وتساعد في المحافظة عليه. وفي ضوء ذلك، قدمت اتفاقية الأنواع المهاجرة حكماً هاماً ينص على أن المجموعة المنغولية ستبقى في الملحق الثاني، وأنه يمكن خفض تصنيف المجموعات الأخرى إذا ما نفذت مشاريع حفظ مماثلة تسمح بالاستخدام المستدام. وفي وقت لاحق، أنشأت مذكرة التفاهم الخاصة بالطيور الجارحة، التي يشكل الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة أحد شركائها الأساسيين، فريق عمل الصقر الحر الذي وضع خطة عمل عالمية (خطة عمل الصقر الحر). وتتضمن هذه الخطة عدداً من المشاريع الرئيسية لحفظ هذا النوع.

وكان أول هذه المشاريع "بوابة لتعزيز الثقة"، وهي بوابة إنترنت متعددة اللغات مصممة للوصول إلى الهواتف الذكية ومتوفرة بلغات الذين يشاركون في استخدام هذا النوع، وهي: العربية والروسية والباشتو والفارسية. الغرض من هذه البوابة هو تحقيق التواصل مع من يستخدمون هذا الصقر لمعرفة مواقفهم وملاحظاتهم وتوفير بعض المعلومات لهم لتشجيع الاستخدام المستدام. تم تمويل المرحلة الأولى بصورة أولية من الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة، من أجل إنشاء شراكة مع منظمة حياة الطيور العالمية، واتفاقية الأنواع المهاجرة/ برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة والاتحاد الدولي لحفظ الطبيعة والموارد الطبيعية. وقد حققت نجاحاً كبيراً، حيث وصلت إلى أكثر من 4000 مستخدم، وهو جهد متفرد لرصد والمساهمة في دعم الاستخدام المستدام للأنواع.



ويشمل المشروع الثاني وضع 100 جهاز تعقب بالقمر الصناعي على أفراخ صقور الحر لتتبع انتشارها من أراضي التعشيش ومراقبتها لمعرفة مصائرهم. وقد بدأ هذا المشروع مرة أخرى من الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة بدعم مالي من جمعية القناص القطرية. وتم وضع 10 أجهزة تعقب على صقور الحر في جنوب روسيا. النتائج الأولية مثيرة للقلق حيث اختفت 4 أفراخ، وبينما ننتظر نتائج أخرى، فقد علمنا أن اثنين من هذه الأفراخ تم أخذهما بواسطة بعض الصيادين. وقد تم نتيجة لهذه الجهود اعتقال اثنين من مجموعة من الصيادين غير الشرعيين، ونخطط لمواصلة هذا الجهد، والآن لدينا تمويل من نادي صقاري الإمارات لوضع 10 أجهزة تعقب إضافية على صقور الحر في الموسم المقبل.

أما المشروع الثالث فهو إنشاء برنامج ثانٍ لبناء أعشاش صناعية، يمكن أن يسفر عن إنشاء منطقة أخرى تسمح بالحصاد المستدام.

ويتوخى المشروع الرئيسي الرابع التخفيف من خطر آلاف الكيلومترات من خطوط توزيع الكهرباء الممتدة عبر نطاق هذا النوع. وتشير البحوث التي أجراها الصقارون إلى أن خطوط الكهرباء تقتل ما يقدر بنحو 5000 صقر حر في السنة في منغوليا وحدها. وكان الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة مؤيداً لحركة ناجحة تدعو إلى توصية في المؤتمر العالمي للاتحاد الدولي لحفظ الطبيعة لعام 2016، تدعو الحكومات وشركات الطاقة والممولين إلى معالجة هذه المسألة. إن جهودنا الآن هي رفع مستوى الوعي بهذا المأرق، وتعزيز الجهود للتخفيف من خطر الخطوط القائمة والتصميم الصحيح للبنية التحتية الجديدة في نطاق الصقر الحر وحول العالم. ونرى أن التهديد الذي تتعرض له الطيور، وخاصة الطيور الجارحة، هو ما يعادل الدمار الناجم عن مبيد دي. دي. تي في القرن السابق. ولذلك، فإننا نخطط للعمل مع المشاركين في رعاية هذا المشروع لإصدار كتيب إعلامي يقدم المعلومات ذات الصلة إلى الحكومات وموولي البنية التحتية.

يجب أن يكون الحل للصقر الحر في أيدي السكان المحليين الذين يستعملون هذا النوع. إذا نظرنا بتمعن للنطاق الواسع للصقر الحر، فمن غير الواقعي إن لم يكن من الغرور أن نتوقع أن القرارات التي تتخذ في الاتفاقيات الدولية سوف تكون كافية وحدها لإحداث التغييرات المنشودة في السلوكيات والمواقف اللازمة للوصول إلى حالة للاستخدام المستدام للأنواع، ناهيك عن الوقف الإجمالي للاستخدام. لذلك، يجب أن تأتي الحلول من داخل المنطقة. وقد بدأت الخطوات الأولى في هذا الصدد من نائب الرئيس لمنطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا، معالي ماجد المنصوري، الذي عقد ورشة عمل في أبو ظبي في سبتمبر 2016، لوضع "استراتيجية للصقارة في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا". وضمت هذه الورشة صقارين وباحثين من المنطقة، ونظرت في تحديد ومعالجة التحديات التي تواجه الصقور في تلك المنطقة. ومن المقرر عقد ورشة عمل ثانية في 25 أبريل 2017 لمكافحة الإتجار غير المشروع بالصقور في الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا. ويعتزم الاتحاد متابعة هذا الجهد بعقد مؤتمر للتصدي للاستخدام المستدام للصقر الحر بالتزامن مع اجتماعنا السنوي في جمهورية قبرغيزستان في سبتمبر 2017. وينبغي تنظيم هذا المؤتمر تحت رعاية فريق عمل الصقر الحر لاتفاقية الأنواع المهاجرة بمساعدة الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة. ويحدونا الأمل في الجمع بين ممثلي سلطات الحفظ في منطقة الخليج وآسيا الوسطى والصقارين والمحافظين على البيئة. ولدينا فرصة فريدة للنظر في التدابير التي يمكن أن تعالج قضايا الحفظ التي تواجه الصقر الحر والتي يمكن استخدامها لتنفيذ التجارة القانونية، على أن تكون قابلة للقياس ومستدامة في هذا النوع. وبهذه الطريقة يمكننا ضمان وصول صقور الحر إلى محصول مستدام لهذا النوع في المستقبل. ومن المسلم به أن هذا الجهد طموح، ولكن النجاح مبني على الأحلام والعمل خطوة خطوة في الاتجاه الصحيح. وكما هو الحال مع صقر الشاهين، فإن بقاء هذا النوع يعتمد على جهود الصقارين.

### بوابة الحجل:

وبحلول الوقت الذي يتم فيه نشر هذا التعليق، سيتم إطلاق "بوابة الحجل". وقد ناقشت فكرة هذه البوابة في الطبعة الأخيرة من مجلة الاتحاد، ويمثل مساهمة كبيرة جداً من قبل الصقارين من خلال الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة للحفاظ على التنوع البيولوجي. وفي جميع أنحاء أوروبا، شهدنا تكتيلاً في الزراعة، والآن فإن مساحات كبيرة من الزراعة الأحادية تغطي الأرض. وذهبت الحواجز والأرض المراح التي تستخدم لدعم التنوع البيولوجي. واستخدمت مبيدات الأعشاب لضمان عدم وجود الأعشاب الضارة والمبيدات الحشرية الفعالة في ضمان عدم وجود الحشرات. وعلى نحو فعال، تصبح الأراضي الزراعية صحارى تخلق منتجاً لإطعام البشر أو الماشية أو لاستخدامها كوقود حيوي. وقد عانى الحجل الرمادي الذي كان في السابق الطريدة السائدة للصقارين والرماة في أوروبا قبل تعرضه إلى تدهور كبير في الأعداد إثر فقدان الغطاء النباتي الذي يمكن أن تتكاثر فيه الحشرات التي يتغذى بها. هذا النوع يمكن أن ينظر إليه على أنه حارس لجميع الأنواع الشائعة الأخرى من الطيور والثدييات والحشرات وحتى النباتات التي يتم تدميرها في هذه العملية. ونحن نعلم أن هذه العملية يمكن عكسها من خلال تغييرات بسيطة نسبياً على البيئة. ولتعزيز ذلك، قام الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة بإنشاء بوابة الحجل بالشراكة مع المؤسسة العالمية للحفاظ على الحياة البرية في المملكة المتحدة والمجموعة المتخصصة في استخدام وإدارة البيئة المستدامة التابعة للاتحاد الدولي

لحفظ الطبيعة. وتقوم هذه البوابة على موقع للمعلومات المركزية [www.perdixnet.org](http://www.perdixnet.org) مع المواقع الوطنية باللغات الوطنية. وتهدف هذه البوابة إلى توفير المعلومات وإقامة شراكة بين الصيادين وأصحاب الأراضي والمزارعين والنحالين وغيرهم ممن يرغبون في استعادة التنوع البيولوجي. وهذا نهج هام "من القاع إلى القمة" لمعالجة المشكلة من خلال تعبئة المواطنين على أرض الواقع. ومرة أخرى، يقود الصقارون هذا الجهد. وقد حدد الاتحاد الأوروبي هدفا لوقف فقدان التنوع البيولوجي بحلول عام 2020، وهذا المشروع قادر على المساهمة الفعالة في تحقيق هذا الهدف.

#### حفظ سجلات أنساب وأصول الجوارح المستخدمة في الصقارة:

لا تزال الصقارة واحدة من الحالات القليلة التي لا يتم فيها دعم النشاط القائم حول إكثار الحيوانات في الأسر بسجلات تتم إدارتها بصورة مستقلة لتوثيق الأنساب التي تظهر خط الدم للأفراد المتاحة للشراء. ومع نضج مشاريع الإكثار في الأسر لدينا، من المعقول أن نتوقع أن يطلب المشترون شهادات تحدد أصل ومصدر ونسب الطيور التي يشترونها، والتأكيد على أن الطائر المزمع شراؤه ينتمي إلى نوع معين أو إلى سلالة نقية من ذلك النوع. وقبل كل شيء، هل هو من مصدر شرعي وقانوني. ويعتبر الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة في وضع جيد ليكون بمثابة وكالة مستقلة قادرة على جمع سجلات المربين وإصدار شهادات النسب للطيور التي ينتجونها. ويمكن أن تستند هذه الأنساب إلى الأنواع أو الأنواع الفرعية (على سبيل المثال مع الشاهين أحمر الريش) ويمكن أن تظهر خطوط نسب لمثل "الشاهين الاسكتلندي". وسوف توفر الرسوم التي تولدها هذه الخدمة تمويلا أساسيا لضمان استمرار عمل الاتحاد وتمثيله للصقارين. في حين أننا نقر بأن هذه الخدمة قد تكون مثيرة للجدل، إلا أن هذا المشروع مربح للطرفين، حيث يحصل الصقارون على وثائق قيمة لأي من الطيور التي يقومون بشراؤها، مع المساهمة في التمويل المستدام للاتحاد العالمي للصقارة.

وهناك جانبان هامان لهذا المشروع يتطلبان مزيدا من التوضيح:

1. تعترف اتفاقية الإتجار الدولي في الحيوانات والنباتات البرية المهددة بالانقراض - ساتيس بوثيقة جواز سفر الصقور الذي يمكن تقديمه للسماح بالتنقل المتكرر عبر الحدود، وذلك بناء على مقترح من دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة بدعم من الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة. ومن شأن توفير شهادات إثبات المصدر والأصل الوراثي أن تتيح التطوير الفعال لجوازات سفر الصقور. وقد يكون ذلك مفيداً، على سبيل المثال في نقل الطيور بين الاتحاد الأوروبي وبريطانيا بعد خروج بريطانيا من الاتحاد الأوروبي.
2. ويمكن أيضاً إدارة هذا المشروع بالاقتران مع نظام "العلامات التمييزية وبنك الحمض النووي" الذي اقترحه الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة لمنع تغطية التجارة غير المشروعة في الطيور. ويعتمد هذا النظام على وضع علامات على الطيور (حلقة أو رقاقة صغيرة)، فضلا عن إنشاء بنك للحمض النووي (ريشة من كل صقر). وسيتم تطبيق هذا المبدأ على المشروع التجريبي للاتحاد العالمي للصقارة الذي سيشمل عقاب بونيلي الأوروبي.

قضية عقاب بونيلي في أوروبا هي التي شجعت على توجيه انتقادات للصقارة والتي برزت إلى السطح لأول مرة في عام 2013. يتم في كل عام تهريب بعض صغار عقاب بونيلي من خلال الصيد غير المشروع من مجموعات هذه الطيور التي تزدهر في صقلية. وقد تمت استعادة عدد من هذه الطيور بينما كان يجري تهريبها شمالا من إيطاليا. وعلى الرغم من أننا لا نعرف وجهة هذه الطيور، ولكن سلطات حفظ البيئة في إيطاليا مقتنعة بأن الصقارين هم المسؤولون عنها. وقد قام الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة بتمويل مشروع بحثي لبناء القدرات في مجال الطب الشرعي لعقاب بونيلي لتحديد هوية هذه الطيور. يمكننا بعد ذلك إنشاء سجل يدار للمربين الشرعيين لهذا النوع مع بنك للحمض النووي لطيور عقاب بونيلي التي يتم إكثارها في الأسر. وهذا من شأنه أن يحمي المربين من الانتقادات، ويضمن للمشتري الحصول على الطيور بطرق مشروعة ويكافح جريمة كبيرة تعاني منها الحياة البرية وتجلب للصقارين سمعة سيئة. ويحدونا الأمل في أن يحظى هذا السجل بدعم قوي من جميع الصقارين، كما أنه، بغض النظر عن كونه خدمة قيمة لهم، فإنه يمكن أن يوفر التمويل الأساسي لضمان استمرار وجود اتحادهم في المستقبل.



### مستقبل الصقارة:

وتمشيا مع مفاهيم التراث الثقافي غير المادي، فإن الممارسة المستمرة للصقارة تعتمد على الشباب، وتقع على عاتق الصقارين الراسخين مسؤولية دفع الشباب وتشجيعهم على المشاركة. وقد اضطلعت فرق العمل المعنية بالصقارين الشباب والجماعات النسائية التابعة للاتحاد العالمي للصقارة بهذا الدور من خلال مشروع مشترك أعدوه لمشاركة الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة في اليوم العالمي للحياة البرية حيث كان الموضوع هو تشجيع مشاركة الشباب في الحفظ. وأدى تعاونهم إلى تصوير فيديو جذاب يظهر مشاركة الصقارين في الحفظ. وكان إنجازهم الرائع هو مشاهدة هذا الفيديو من ما يربو على 75000 شخص. وشهدنا أيضا بدء النشرات الإخبارية للأطفال التي أعدها الفريق العامل المعني بالمرأة. المواهب والحماس داخل هذه المجموعات لم تدع لي أي قلق على مستقبل الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة.

يعقد مهرجان الصداقة الدولي الرابع للبيزرة في أبوظبي في ديسمبر من هذا العام. وسيكون هذا المهرجان مختلفا بشكل كبير عن المهرجانات السابقة. وينصب تركيزه على تطوير قدرات الصقارين الشباب والقيادة المستقبلية للصيد بالصقور. يمثل الصقارون الذين ستم دعوتهم الشباب في دولهم، وسوف تهدف الأنشطة إلى زيادة مهاراتهم في الصيد بالصقور ومعرفة قضايا الصقارة وطرق العناية بالصقور. وسيقام المهرجان في مخيم صحراوي لإعطاء الشباب فرصة لتجربة البقاء في الصحراء وممارسة الحياة على الطريقة البدوية. قيل كل شيء، سيكون ذلك فرصة رائعة للشباب لتوسيع معارفهم وخلق صداقات مع الآخرين من جميع أنحاء العالم. يا لها من فرصة مذهلة!

### ختاماً:

لا تزال هناك مجموعة من الموضوعات التي يمكن التطرق إليها والعديد من الأفراد والمنظمات التي تستحق الإشارة إلى إسهاماتهم في جهودنا. لا يمكن أن يكون هذا التعليق شاملاً. ويجري القيام بالكثير من أجل النهوض بالصقارة باعتبارها فن ديناميكي حيوي، وتشجيع قبول ممارسة لا يفهمها عامة الجمهور أو الحكومات أو حتى منظمات الحفظ. إننا نبذل جهداً حقيقياً للتقدم إلى الأمام بما يحظى بتقدير واعتراف أوسع. وهناك تحديات كبيرة تنتظرنا إذا أردنا أن نبقى ممارستنا للأجيال المقبلة. ولكل صقار دور في هذا الجهد. ومع ذلك، كصقارين، يمكننا أيضا أن نكون على ثقة تامة من أننا نمتلك ناصية الكفاءة والتمثيل الديناميكي للحفاظ على هذا التراث العريق.





# HOUBARA BUSTARD RECOVERY PROGRAM

*by Mark Williams*



Houbara in flight

حبارى أثناء الطيران



Many of us have heard that houbara are a traditional species of prey for Arab falconry and that it is a species of concern due mostly to overhunting. However, not many people are aware of the conservation efforts of several GCC countries and in particular the UAE in assisting with the population recovery with large-scale captive breeding projects and release programs. In the UAE, over 50,000 houbara are produced annually with similar breeding projects in Saudi Arabia, where the first large-scale captive breeding projects were started, and also in Qatar. Many houbara are released domestically but there are also release projects in countries such as Morocco, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and several more.

Living and working in Dubai, when not working or flying my falcons, I am often in the desert pursuing my other passion of wildlife photography. As such I have been able to study and monitor several wildlife species including the houbara. I'm certainly seeing more houbara this year than ever before. Recent trips into the desert in early April have revealed many houbara are nesting now. Houbara lay two eggs as a rule and the incubation period is approximately 21 days. Once the chick has hatched it is almost immediately mobile and feeding yet this is a hard time to be out in the desert from mid-April onwards when temperatures can exceed 40°C in the peak of the day.

As far as I am aware, they have historically bred in the UAE but died out many years ago, probably attributed to overgrazing of natural habitat and unsustainable

hunting. I'm told that the birds used for captive breeding now are originally obtained from the Pakistani species of MacQueen's houbara bustard. It is pleasing and surprising to see how the released captive-bred birds have so readily adapted to breeding naturally in the wild in large numbers. The summer heat always poses a challenge to any incubating parent and young chicks. To my amusement and fascination I discovered that to address this, the government-funded study group had erected shade screens over every known nest site. The shade is most beneficial to the incubating parent as, after hatching, the houbara and her chicks go on walkabout finding food. They then use natural cover for shelter from the heat and predators.

"Only in Dubai" is a phrase we hear often and it certainly applies in this instance. Every single nesting houbara has its own private security guard hired to spend over 10 hours a day watching over them at each nest location. Once the chicks have hatched they are immediately mobile and follow mum, and the security guard follows the houbara family to protect them from natural and human predators.

It is so good to witness first hand the rewards for the efforts of the UAE government and their commitment to the conservation of this and other wildlife species. They do not publicize this great achievement, instead quietly going about doing this work with little recognition. What is needed now is to learn from the past and educate on the concept of sustainable hunting. Let's hope the houbara continues to do well; their future certainly looks bright.

Two of four eggs to be laid.

اثنان من أربع بيضات تم وضعها في العش





# برنامج استعادة الحبارى

## مارك وليامز

سمع الكثير منا بأن الحبارى هي الطريدة التقليدية لرياضة الصيد بالصقور العربية، وأن وضعها يثير القلق بسبب الصيد الجائر في الغالب. ومع ذلك، فإن كثير من الناس لا يدركون جهود الحفظ التي تقوم بها عدة دول في مجلس التعاون الخليجي ودولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة بشكل خاص للمساعدة في استعادة أعداد هذا الطائر عن طريق مشاريع الإكثار في الأسر والإطلاق في البرية على نطاق واسع. وفي دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة وحدها، يتم إنتاج أكثر من 50 ألف حبارى سنوياً، وتوجد مشاريع مماثلة في المملكة العربية السعودية حيث بدأ هناك أول مشروع للإكثار في الأسر على نطاق واسع، وكذلك في قطر. ويتم إطلاق العديد من الحبارى محلياً، ولكن هناك أيضاً مشاريع للإكثار والإطلاق في بلدان أخرى مثل المغرب وكازاخستان وباكستان والعديد من الدول الأخرى.

الذين يعيشون ويعملون في دبي، عندما أكون خارج العمل ولا أقوم بتطير صقوري، أتوغل في كثير من الأحيان في الصحراء لمتابعة شعفي الآخر وهو تصوير الحياة البرية. استطعت بذلك دراسة ورصد عدة أنواع من الحياة البرية بما في ذلك الحبارى. وفي هذا العام، فإنني بالتأكيد أرى المزيد من الحبارى أكثر من أي وقت مضى. وقد كشفت رحلاتي الأخيرة في الصحراء في مطلع إبريل وجود العديد من الحبارى وتعشيشها الآن. تضع الحبارى اثنين من البيض عادةً، وتمتد فترة الحضانة حوالي 21 يوماً. وبمجرد أن يفقس الفرخ، فإنه يبدأ على الفور تقريباً في التحرك والتغذية، ولكن يعتبر هذا الوقت صعباً في الصحراء من منتصف أبريل فصاعداً عندما تتجاوز درجات الحرارة 40 درجة مئوية في ذروة النهار .

وبجد علمي، فقد كانت الحبارى تتكاثر تاريخياً في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة ولكنها اختفت منذ سنوات عديدة. ربما يعزى ذلك إلى الرعي الجائر في الموائل الطبيعية والصيد غير المستدام. قيل لي إن الطيور التي تستخدم الآن في مشاريع الإكثار بالأسر، يعود أصلها إلى نوع الحبارى الآسيوية التي تم جلبه من باكستان. إلا أن من المفرج والمستغرب أيضاً أن نرى كيف استطاعت هذه الطيور المكاثرة في الأسر التكيف بسرعة والتكاثر بشكل طبيعي في البرية بأعداد كبيرة. تشكل حرارة الصيف دائماً تحدياً لأي أم حاضنة ولأفراخها الصغار. ولقد سررت وعجبت، حينما اكتشفت الطريقة التي تمت بها مواجهة هذه المشكلة، فقد مولت الحكومة مجموعة متخصصة لإقامة ظل على كل موقع عش معروف. الظل هو الأكثر فائدة للأم الحاضنة وأفراخها حتى تبدأ في التجول بحثاً عن الغذاء، حيث تستخدم هذه الطيور الغطاء النباتي الطبيعي للاختباء من الحرارة والحيوانات المفترسة .

"فقط في دبي" عبارة نسمعها في كثير من الأحيان... وتنطبق بالتأكيد على هذه الحالة: لكل حبارى معشقة حارس أمن خاص متعاقد معه لقضاء أكثر من عشر ساعات يومياً في مراقبتها في كل موقع من مواقع التعشيش. بمجرد أن تقف الأفراخ وتبدأ فوراً في التحرك لمتابعة أمها، فإن حارس الأمن يتبع عائلة الحبارى لحمايتها من الحيوانات المفترسة الطبيعية ومن البشر .

انه لأمر جيد جداً ليشهدوا مباشرة ثمار جهود حكومة دولة الإمارات وهذا الالتزام بالحفاظ على هذه الأنواع وغيرها من الحيوانات البرية. انهم لا يعلنون عن هذا الإنجاز العظيم وإنما يمضون بهدوء في تحقيق أهدافهم مع القليل من التقدير والاعتراف. ما هو مطلوب الآن هو أن نتعلم من الماضي وندرك مفهوم الصيد المستدام. دعونا نأمل في استمرار الحبارى بوضع جيد، وبالتأكيد، فإن المستقبل يبدو مشرقاً أمامها.



Houbara checks out her chick

حبارى تتفقد فرخها

1

Young houbara chick seems to have  
a lot to say for himself.

أفراخ حبارى يبدو أن لديها الكثير  
لتقوله عن نفسها

2

Houbara feeding her brood of three chicks

حبارى تغذي أفراخها الثلاثة في العش

3

Female houbara incubating

أنثى حبارى حاضنة

4

Houbara eating food supplements

مكملات غذائية للحبارى

5

Female about to sit on her eggs after  
turning them

أنثى على وشك حضن بيضها بعد تحريكه

1

2

3







5

6

Houbara wandering the desert

حبارى تتجول في الصحراء

6





# 172 STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM THE MOHAMMED BIN ZAYED FALCONRY AND DESERT PHYSIOGNOMY SCHOOL

The Mohammed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School has graduated the last batch of students from the first group to be enrolled in the school, bringing the total number of graduates to 172 since the inception of the school on 18 December 2016.

The students who graduated have been taught the fundamentals of Arabian falconry and the ethics, rules and art which are closely connected to environmental protection, knowing the basic principles of living, and adapting to the desert life.

His Excellency Majid Ali Al Mansouri, Executive Director of the Emirates Falconers' Club, said, "In such a short period of time, the Mohammed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School has been able to produce a large number of falconers who will convey the mission of the school and educate the young people about the unique qualities of Arabian falconry in the United Arab Emirates, the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab world. The school promotes sustainable traditions in Arabian falconry and presents them in a fun and accessible way for our children to learn and cherish these noble and honored heritages.

"The 172 students who graduated were divided into four different phases of study according to the school curriculum, including 100 students trained in the first phase, 42 in the second phase, 17 in the third phase and

13 in the fourth stage. We are still receiving hundreds of applications from parents of various nationalities wanting their children to enroll in the school."

Al Mansouri explained that the lessons at the school are divided into two sections: theoretical lectures in classrooms, and practical classes in the open sand of Al Hadheerah. The classes are supervised by trainers who were carefully chosen for their experience and quality of training, to teach the basic principles of falconry and the correct practice of Arabian falconry.

"The trainers explain current and past information on the falconry hunting sport to future generations, while teaching the students the good morals that we inherited from the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the first falconer," he said.

It's important to note that the Mohammed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School provides specialized training programs on hunting with falcons, and on adapting to desert life, through a group of specialists and experts in the field. The latest educational methods have been adopted to expand the number of people from around the world wishing to join the school and learn the techniques of Arabian falconry. The school also offers a range of active courses for falconers and specialists, as well as various entertaining courses.





# في موسمها الأول

## مدرسة الشيخ محمد بن زايد للصقارة وفراسة الصحراء

### تخرج 172 صقار

شهدت مدرسة محمد بن زايد للصقارة وفراسة الصحراء تخريج الدورة الأخيرة في الموسم الأول من المتدربين لبيصل العدد الإجمالي الى 172 خريجاً يتقنون الصقارة العربية وأخلاقياتها وقواعدها وفنونها العريقة التي ترتبط بالمحافظة على الطبيعة، ومعرفة المبادئ الأساسية لفراسة الصحراء وتعزيز القدرة على التعامل والعيش فيها، وذلك منذ الانطلاقة الرسمية في الثامن عشر من ديسمبر العامي الماضي.

وقال معالي ماجد علي المنصوري المدير التنفيذي لنادي صقاري الإمارات: لقد استطاعت مدرسة محمد بن زايد للصقارة وفراسة الصحراء في هذه الفترة القصيرة من تخريج هذا العدد الكبير الصقارين الذين سيجملون الرسالة السامية التي تأسست من أجلها المدرسة لغرس المبادئ الصحيحة للصقارة العربية في النشء، والتعريف بالخصائص المتفردة للصقارة العربية في الإمارات وشبه الجزيرة العربية والعالم العربي على المستوى الوطني والعالمي، والترويج للتقاليد المستدامة للصقارة العربية، وتقديمها بطريقة ممتعة تسهل على أبنائنا تعلم وعشق هذا الإرث.

واضاف المنصوري : وما يدعونا للفخر والاعتزاز ايضا ان الخريجين الـ 172 مقسمين على أربع مراحل دراسية مختلفة حسب المنهج المتبع في مدرسة محمد بن زايد للصقارة وفراسة الصحراء، فهناك 100 متدرب أكملوا المستوى الأول و 42 متدرب أكملوا المستوى الثاني و 17 انهوا المستوى الثالث و 13 متدرب انهوا المستوى الرابع ، ولانزلنا نستقبل مئات الطلاب من قبل الراغبين في تسجيل أبنائهم في المدرسة من جميع الجنسيات ومختلف الأعمار .

وتتقسم الدراسة في مدرسة محمد بن زايد الى قسمين، الحصص النظرية في القاعات المغلقة والحصص العملية في الهواء الطلق على رمال الصحراء (الحضيرة)، والتي يشرف عليها مدرّبين تم اختيارهم بعناية، لأنهم يملكون الخبرة والكفاءة والجودة لتعليم أسس ومبادئ الصقارة والممارسات الصحيحة للصقارة العربية ، لتعمق عرى التواصل بين الحاضر والماضي، وتنقل رياضة الصيد بالصقور للأجيال القادمة مع تعليمهم الاخلاق الحميدة التي توارثتها من الصقار الأول الشيخ زايد بن سلطان آل نهيان - طيب الله ثراه - الجدير بالذكر أن المدرسة تقدم برامج تدريبية متخصصة بالصيد بالصقور وفراسة الصحراء من خلال مجموعة من المتخصصين وأصحاب الخبرة في هذا الميدان، مع تطبيق أحدث الوسائل التعليمية التي توسع قاعدة الراغبين بالانضمام إلى مقاعد المدرسة وتعلم فنون الصقارة العربية من مختلف دول العالم. كما تقدم المدرسة مجموعة متنوعة من الدورات التثقيفية للصقارين والباحثين المتخصصين في مجال الصقارة، إلى جانب الدورات الترفيهية المختلفة.







# Falconry

*without borders, for everybody*

*by Dr. Javier Ceballos; World Falconry Day Coordinator*

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**World Falconry Day is important for the visibility of falconry. Right from the beginning it received a warm welcome, both from the falconry community and international civil society. Each year has seen a greater variety of activities and a larger number of countries involved.**

World Falconry Day (WFD) is a great showcase for the IAF and a good opportunity to send out messages worldwide:

- politically, by increasing the visibility of falconry in the European parliament and UNESCO
- financially, by increasing membership of associations like NAFA
- generally, by strengthening the sense of belonging to a worldwide falconry community.

Most participating falconry associations and individuals are satisfied with the impact of the WFD activities at an international level. WFD serves those with few possibilities to make themselves known, and we have been happy to see initiatives coming from countries on all continents.

## Approach

The date chosen for WFD is November 16th, which is the anniversary of the recognition of falconry by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Some activities are more academic, while

others are more at family level and rather playful. World Falconry Day had been recognized in schools and museums, in the countryside as well as in cities.

## The beginnings

As I wrote in the Spring 2013 Journal, World Falconry Day was conceived in a communication between members of the IAF Advisory Committee. Subsequently, I presented my ideas at the AGM in June 2013 in Valkenswaard, Holland. The WFD Working Group was born with the participation of Adrian Lombard (South Africa), Véronique Blontrock (Belgium), Yukio Asaoka (Japan), Dan Cecchini (USA), Gary Timbrell (Ireland) and Patrizia Cimerio (Italy).



The concept is simple. Each year a theme is agreed upon. Falconers and associations from all countries who wish to participate can participate. They may do so within the IAF's official program or as independent initiatives. I reiterate my gratitude to Andrea Villa for his invaluable collaboration in promotion, and to Patrizia Cimerio for her creativity in the design of the logo.





## Activities

A great variety of activities have been carried out, mostly altruistic.

The 2013 IAF WFD program recorded activities in the following 20 countries: Germany, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Slovenia, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe. In 2016 we surpassed that, with 50 participating countries. We are confident that we can maintain the quality of the activities and, above all, continue supporting the feeling of belonging to the international falconry community. Independent activities tend to be private initiatives prepared with fewer resources. Their number is increasing, since the realization is rather easy and the WFD logo may be used freely. It was a pleasant surprise, the enormous creativity that was developed in the first four years of WFD.

## Slogans

For each annual WFD, slogans are carefully thought out. In 2013, we focused on the 10th anniversary of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH. In 2014 and 2015, we wanted to emphasize the importance of preserving and sharing our knowledge for future generations. In 2016, the motto was based on the recovery of peregrine falcon populations. This year, the focus is on young people, and the Festival of Falconry later this year has been inspired by a message of present and future falconry.

2013 "Celebrating ICH constitutes falconry for over 4000 years"

2014 "Sharing our knowledge and expertise"

2015 "Falconry for future generations"

2016 "Celebrating recovery of the Peregrine Falcon"

2017 "Learning and teaching. Passing on our cultural heritage"

Falconry associations: open doors for the general public, organization of hunting parties, workshops, conferences...

Academic institutions: conferences, seminars, exhibitions...

Cultural institutions: exhibitions in museums and cultural centers of works of art related to falconry, design of itineraries to discover the falconry and/or works of art of a certain region.

Schools: workshops, drawing contests, photography, literature, research, visits of falconers to the classroom...

Social groups: visits to airports where falconry is used to ensure the safety of airplanes, participation in hunting days...

Visibility: presence in TV, radio, and press through reports, interviews, news, articles...

Reviewing the hundreds of activities developed, I find it difficult to highlight the most significant ones. Consequently I limit myself to some of the activities of the past two years.

The School Links Programme, now funded by the IAF but initiated by the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, International Wildlife Consultants, and the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia, actively participates every year, highlighting the enthusiasm of Project Manager Nicola Dixon. On WFD 2015, 560 students took part, and 61 paintings and 58 poems were created by students for the 2016 calendar competition.







In November 2015, the conference “Falconry in the Mediterranean Context” was organized in Abu Dhabi by the NYUAD Institute, the Warburg Institute and the IAF. On 16th November, workshop attendees traveled to the Mohammed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, where H.E. Majed Al Mansouri met with the falconers and their falcons, and had kindly arranged a traditional Arabic dinner afterwards.

During that visit, the films once made by Roger Upton during his many hawking trips in Abu Dhabi with His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, were ceremonially handed over by Dr. Adrian Lombard and Mark Upton, and some clips were shown.

In 2016, we celebrated the recovery of the Peregrine falcon, recognizing the work of emblematic figures in the conservation of this species: Dr. Tom J Cade (USA), Dr. Christian Saar (Germany) and Dr. Carl Jones (UK).

Falcons Bridge, which organizes duck-hunting trips for falconers in one of the best places in Europe (Extremadura, Spain) developed

an interesting initiative. On 16th November they filmed waiting-on flights at ducks, and showed them on their website, [www.falconsbridge.com](http://www.falconsbridge.com). In this way they made known one of the most impressive sights that can be observed in modern falconry.

The Irish Hawking Club organized in 2016 in Sneem,

Ireland, the most international meeting in the brief history of World Falconry Day. More than 50 countries were represented at the event, which coincided with the IAF AGM. The good work developed by Hilary White made it possible for WFD to be featured in the national press.



### Improvement points for future editions

We expect the next WFD, the fifth, to have the greatest participation in its history. Not long thereafter, the Festival of Falconry will take place in Abu Dhabi with the participation of young people from all over the world.

The success of World Falconry Day depends on its promotion. We need National Delegates to cooperate more in reaching all the collectives of each country.

Each National Delegate is expected to send at least one proposal for the celebration of WFD and, before 31st July 2017, to send to [wfd@iaf.org](mailto:wfd@iaf.org) a compilation of WFD activities held over the last four years, for an album marking the 5th anniversary.

From these lines my thanks are conveyed to all those who find falconry a heritage worth preserving and who have actively been supporting this initiative.





# Three Perspectives on the African Crowned Eagle, *Stephanoaetus coronatus*: Biology, Falconry and Anthropology

*by Adrian Lombard, Steven Squires,  
and Lauren McGough*

## **Part I – An unexpected survivor in suburban Africa** *Adrian Lombard*

The African Crowned Eagle is a bird which is truly “larger than life” and whose “reality” is full of surprises. The limited experience and notoriety of the species as a falconry bird arose, initially, from David Reid-Henry’s famous Tiara. This female Crowned Eagle was David’s constant companion for years and served as one of my own first introductions to falconry as a young boy. She was a powerful and dominant individual who occasioned David to make several visits to the hospital emergency room. Others have since bred and successfully flown this species for falconry, including Andrew Knowles-Brown of Scotland and Simon Thompsett in Kenya. The bird flown by Andre Groenewald of Zimbabwe is a legend of Southern African Falconry.

In Africa, this bird is renowned as a forest hunter of remarkable rapacity and is recorded taking vervet monkeys and even young bushbuck. I have a formal police report of an alleged attack on a young girl in Zambia with photos of the eagle which was subsequently shot. Its secretive life as the silent assassin in African forests has led to concerns that this species is rare, so it is remarkable that a relatively large population of these birds has been identified in the indigenous and exotic forests which surround the conurbation of Durban and Pietermaritzburg in Kwa-Zulu Natal on the eastern

seaboard of South Africa. Even this population is the subject of legend and it has long been believed that they survive through preying on suburban cats and fluffy dogs. This is a population which cries out for sound scientific research. The task has now been undertaken by Shane McPherson, who, as a student of the University of Natal, has recently obtained his PhD presenting a thesis on “The Urban Ecology of the Crowned Eagle, *Stephanoaetus coronatus* in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa”. He received the enthusiastic practical support of the Natal Falconry Club as well as some financial support from the South African Falconry Association in his efforts. This provides an excellent example of the contribution which falconers are able to make to scientific research where citizen-science and specialist skills can contribute to valuable research. In congratulating Shane on his achievement, Professor Colleen Downs commented, “Generally urbanization has negative effects on biodiversity, Shane’s research is the first detailed work on a large predatory raptor and a threatened species persisting in an urban environment. He has made important findings and made management recommendations for their conservation.” He also demonstrated how dependent the Crowned Eagles were on remaining forest patches and that they were

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particularly vulnerable to human impacts and land transformation.

Researching these birds is not for the faint-hearted. The nests are frequently sited high in smooth-barked exotic eucalyptus trees requiring staged climbs with ropes, and the eagles are known to defend their nests with aggression, on occasion. “He regularly had to climb trees 30 m high or more with a helmet and a backpack to prevent an eagle attacking him with its talons,” said Downs.

In his search for eagle nests McPherson discovered many more than had been predicted, with nests being distributed about every 2.5 km along river systems throughout eThekweni. A total of approximately 65 nests were found in this relatively limited area. A GPS tracking study (supported in part by the South African Falconry Association) of these territorial adults revealed the importance of indigenous forests within this landscape – natural habitats protected by the eThekweni Municipality’s Durban Metropolitan Open Space System.

One of the interesting outcomes of this project was the analysis of the prey items of these eagles. Contrary to popular belief, domestic animals accounted for less than one per cent of the prey, with no dogs recorded. This result is very important in advocacy for the eagles and correcting public perceptions. The study, using camera traps, demonstrated that the numerical proportion of avian prey, particularly hadeda ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*) pulli, was several times greater than described in previous studies on the diet of this species. The methodology used and the abundance of hadeda ibis in these urban environments are potential contributing factors. Rock



hyrax (*Procavia capensis*) was the primary prey and where hyrax were unavailable, the diet composition was broader and included more vervet monkeys (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*). It was found that domestic stock comprised six per cent of the identifiable prey.

The Crowned Eagle is far from being an ideal falconry bird and is a species which should never be placed in the hands of a falconer without adequate skills and hunting habitat. It remains a dramatic and beautiful forest predator and we are proud that falconers have contributed to the knowledge and conservation effort for this enigmatic bird.

## Part II – The Crowned Eagle as a falconry bird: a sample of one Steven Squires

Before launching forth on the subject of crowned eagles, a few points of perspective are required. I am a long-time falconer with many years of longwing flying under the belt. As pre-eagle experience I have had one tawny eagle for a couple of years, and other than that have pretty little experience with raptors larger than a saker or jackal buzzard. I live and farm in the central desert of South Africa where the skies are huge and the writ of law runs thin. It is a province called the Free State.

The crowned eagle is not a particularly large eagle. Mine flies at about three kilograms, and a female up to about four kilograms. They have however a huge and extremely powerful foot, a narrow, powerful and

vertically compressed beak, long tail and short, broad, wings. It is a forest raptor that specialises in mammalian prey up to about 20 kg in weight though usually in the 2-3 kg range. In level flight they can fly fast, 65 km per hour on my truck speed, and they do not slow down to take quarry, smashing into it at about that speed. It has been likened to an avian leopard and indeed shares many characteristics with that feline forest predator.

My journey to a crowned eagle started with an invasion of vervet monkeys, a recent immigrant to our farm, and a hugely successful pest of irrigated crops. Having read of wild crowned eagles predating on these primates I was moved to wonder if they could not be employed



to engender our local population with a more formal respect for a farmer and his crops.

Crowned eagles do not occur naturally in the Free State so I had to liaise with other falconers to obtain one, and to negotiate the myriad of permits required for its possession and transport. After several years the bureaucratic planets aligned with the availability of a rehab bird in Durban, and I received a call from my friend Ross Kramm: "Come and get it."

The thought of driving close to a thousand kilometres with an unfamiliar eagle in my truck struck me as foolish, so I fired up our light aircraft and flew down to fetch it, taking two commercial pilots with me to fly the plane back. I was introduced to the bird by Ross, who lent me a slightly reinforced goshawk glove to hold it on, and a hood. Armed with these I loaded the bird in the back of my mother's hatchback and headed for the airport. I almost had a "refusal to fly" from my pilots, but when I pointed out the bird was tied to me and I would be in the passenger cabin holding it, they relented, we wobbled off into the sky, and the great adventure began.

As we landed I got a first taste of the power of the bird. He had sat calmly for the entire trip on my glove, but

on feeling the bump of landing had a little hissy fit. The bruises on my left arm lasted a week.

Ross had trained the bird to come when called and had tried to hunt it at guinea fowl but due to his urban circumstances could not continue. I therefore inherited what appeared to be a perfectly mannered semi-imprint who was, and still is, quite vocal, but with perfect food manners on the glove. I now had to try to get it to fly. At first I was very cautious, not knowing how far, how fast or how high he would fly, and after kitting him out with two transmitters, took him to the centre of the landing strip with no tree for two kilometres in any direction and called him to my glove. Well he flew about 30 m, landed, and ran the rest of the way. My eagle was obviously no falcon. I realised that he was extremely unfit and could not or would not fly more than about 50 m, and that just above the ground.

I tried many tricks to get him fit – pulled lure, following on, calling to the glove, flying him uphill, kiting – and eventually in desperation I decided on a period of hack. I felt he needed to grow up and some "own time" would do him good. We have a small patch of thick bush on the farm about ten hectares big and a long way from human habitation. It is surrounded by barren treeless plains. I would take him there in the morning wearing a Marshall Scout transmitter and collect him again in the evening just before sunset. He quickly learned the drill and would come flying to the truck as soon as I stopped. His flying skills steadily improved and I was astounded one evening to see him fly through bush that would challenge a black sparrowhawk. He tucked his wings up and hurtled through impossibly small gaps, twisting and turning like a shortwing. But when he hit the fist there was no doubting his authority. It was about this time I required my first trip to the local nurse. Some excitement caused him to squeeze my second hand goshawk glove and with nonchalant ease he drove his hind talon through the leather, through my middle finger and out the other side. Now the hind talon is about 65 mm long, needle sharp and has enormous strength. Short of throttling the bird you do not get it out of you, by which time he will anyway grab you with the other foot in self-defence. No, this is a time for calm and introspection and to count to ten several times over. Eventually he





relented and I retired home hurt. The next morning my hand was unusable, swelled like a balloon, and I sought medical help. Our local nurse, who is quite easy on the eye, took one look at it and told me to drop my pants, bend and await her arrival with the syringes and needles, which was fine – except I could not unbutton my pants with one hand. Her remark when I requested assistance is not printable, but I got some extra penicillin just to make her point.

Not long after, I got a new glove and tried hunting guinea fowl. We would stalk them on foot and he would take flights at flocks around the standing maize. Now anyone who has hunted guinea fowl will know that a single bird has an IQ of about one. Two birds an IQ of two, and a flock of several hundred is intellectually gifted. These birds were in flocks and would easily dodge the eagle's clumsy attempts to grab them and more often than not would launch a counter attack. They are preyed on by the local martial eagles and so are not overawed by big feet and poor footwork. After one of these stand-offs I found the eagle highly agitated, with crown fully erect, staring into the maize after the departing fowl. I called him to the fist but he wouldn't come, so I knelt down and banged him on the chest with my new glove to get him to jump up. Well jump up he did. He struck like a fighting cock with his right foot smack in my face. I had one claw to the left of my left eye, one claw between my eyes and the great hind talon opened me up from my chin through and out my bottom lip. It was so fast I didn't believe it until the blood started running down my shirt. I had a 500-metre

walk back to my truck, but before I had covered half of it the eagle landed next to me bleating piteously and asking for his lift home. This is how my farm staff found me on their way to work, dripping blood and lugging a huge bleating bird. The encounter necessitated a second visit to the nurse who, after stitching up my face and injecting my behind, remarked that she recognised the latter better than the former.

Chastened but not deterred, I continued with my tame hack until one day the eagle did not return. Being a longwinger I have a fairly good working knowledge of Marshall's products and I set off to recover the lost bird. The signal was strong and coming from the centre of the forest. As I negotiated the thicket, from close by, I heard him calling me. Great was my astonishment when I found him sitting on and plucking an adult steenbok antelope, a ram with Rowland Ward size horns. Thinking it must be carrion I felt it and found it still warm to the touch. Slowly the realisation sank in to me that he must have killed it himself. Once he had eaten his fill, I picked him up and took him home with his prize. The next day, the autopsy on the steenbok revealed massive bruising and puncture wounds in the back, neck and chest, bleeding on the skull and puncture wounds to the throat. The animal weighed just on 14 kg. The eagle just under three.

A week later I again had to track him, this time way out into the treeless flats where I found him in possession of a steenbok ewe. This time there was evidence of a massive struggle, his backpack was torn off, the leg transmitter was broken off and lying several meters



from the kill and the ground was littered with hair and feathers. He seemed no worse for wear but I felt my luck was running a bit thin. The hack was summarily ended.

Now his training really began. I flew him daily at a lure towed behind the truck until one day he ignored it, flew in the opposite direction and caught another steenbok ewe I had not even seen. By the time I had covered the several hundred meters to him the ewe was dead and he was facing up to a feisty ram that had come to help its mate. The ram ran off as I approached and number three went into the bag. So far, not one with my help.

I tried various ways of hunting steenbok but the most exciting is walking them up or stalking them. The eagle quickly caught on to the approach and would bolt off the fist like a huge goshawk if we put one up close by. He would ignore distant flushes. The first steenbok I took by this method was a young ram that got up at my feet, ran about 20 m and stopped to look back. As it stopped the eagle flattened it and applied maximum pressure. Like a fool I had left my knife in the truck so tried unsuccessfully to help him kill it with my bare hands. What I could not do he achieved in about a minute, the power of his feet convulsively squeezing and those huge hind talons gouging like a stiletto knife into the rib cage. The steenbok's end was swift.

Another memorable slip was at a more distant animal. We stalked from behind a bush until I could get no closer, 110 paces I measured, and then I slowly raised him above the bush. He took his time eyeing it and then suddenly launched. When I looked round the bush I saw the steenbok busy with its head to the ground sniffing, and the eagle right on the deck exploiting a small anthill for cover, powering his way in. The steenbok didn't see him coming and by the time I got there it was all over.

Now this all sounds very easy, but in between were many, many kilometres walked with a large eagle on your fist, many blank days and many close shaves.

I have learned not to drink tea before going hawking with him. Somewhere in his early life the eagle must have been fed on chicken necks. I once made the mistake of relieving myself of excess tea while he was sitting on the ground some 20 m away. Now Dr Nick Fox warns of this in his excellent book and it is true. What looks like an innocent call of nature to a human is a pickup piece presentation to a hungry eagle. While a goshawk or redtail attaching itself may be painful, a crowned eagle attachment will be life-changing. I fortunately still had my glove on and intercepted his flight just in time to avoid another trip to the nurse. If you want to fly an eagle you have been warned.

I have also trained him to hunt at night. We have a huge abundance of nocturnal animals on the farm: hares, springhares, porcupines, gennets, caracals, jackals, foxes and antelope to name the most common. The springhares are a nuisance in the germinating maize lands where they do a lot of damage. It took one unsuccessful slip to alert him to this quarry, and the second one he saw, he caught. This was off the back of the truck. While it is a poor form of sport, it is a very effective



method of deterring springhares and after one of their number is caught the others seem to spend the rest of the night down their burrows, thus minimising crop damage. The length of the slip is limited by the strength of the spotlight but he will readily take on hundred-meter slips with success.

A more interesting method I am just learning is to use a hand-held spotlight and headlight combination and walk the springhares up. This is far less successful than launching off the back of a truck as there is no height advantage and the power of the lighting is less. It can however provide numerous slips in quick succession, usually ending in a kill. A quick walk around my house at night will provide any number of opportunities, some literally just outside the garden gate. It is a much more entertaining method of night hunting and has the added excitement of walking alone in the bush at night. The dying scream of the springhare is a predator magnet and I have had both jackal and caracal come running in for a bit of the action. What they would do on discovering an eagle already in possession of the kill I don't know, but the end would not be pretty.

Other quarry I have taken includes yellow mongoose, ground squirrels and monkeys. I do not let him fly at canids for fear he may develop a taste for bird dogs, and other than a half-hearted slip at a young caracal have never tried cats.

Now back to the monkeys. Vervet monkeys are a highly intelligent, aggressive and agile quarry. They can bite like a terrier, have four powerful, grasping hands and a long whipping tail. Like a squirrel, they can move up a tree vertically just as fast as horizontally, and for their size are extremely powerful. A large male weighs about eight kilos. My first slip I tried at a large male, baited out into an open field to feed on vodka-soaked maize. Although not entirely ethical, I felt the alcohol might lower its inhibitions. It certainly did. Instead of scampering off at the first sign of danger, the monkey continued stuffing its face until I was about 50 m away. I unhooded the eagle who pulled himself up tight and looked uncomfortable. I walked closer. The monkey then turned away from us and left the field at an unsteady saunter, pausing on the edge of the land to give us a two's up, and then swinging rather unsteadily into a tree. The eagle just watched.

The next time I tried a smaller monkey and within a flash he was off my fist and had it. There was a lot of screaming, biting and flying feathers before he had



it under control, and it is the only time he has ever suffered a bite from a quarry. It is not a pretty flight, not a pretty quarry, and you need a strong stomach to handle the screaming and crying. The third monkey was also medium size and this he grabbed by the head and loins, killing it in seconds. I have had one accident when trying to slip him out of the half-open living room door and he bated at a monkey I had not seen. This took him straight into the plate-glass window, luckily without ill effects, but it has made him refuse slips out the door. Monkey hunting is a work in progress.

I have also had some very exciting flights at birds that have got up at our feet. Once a francolin and once a heron. Both were lucky to escape. I think if the eagle is properly fit he would be able to take guinea fowl in the air from a close flush, and this would be a very pretty flight. I have had numerous falconers asking me why I don't try flying the eagle over a pointing dog, but none of them have yet volunteered their own dog to do the work and I fear if the flight goes wrong it may spoil the friendship as well as the dog.

I still have a great deal to learn about these magnificent eagles and how to hunt with them successfully and



safely. What I have learned in summary is the crowned eagle is a capable falconry bird. It is suited to falconers with an old man's patience, a young man's stamina and strength, a woman's light touch, and a good medical insurance scheme. It needs uninhabited (domestic pet and child free) space to fly, with abundant quarry. It is

a highly intelligent and sensitive bird capable of flying in tight cover as well as open spaces. It is by design an ambush predator and fitness training of a captive bird is probably the single biggest challenge. If I was to choose one bird to provide for me and my family this would be it.

### Part III – The Taung Child's demise, and impressions of the Crowned Eagle *Lauren McGough*

It is impossible to consider the course of human evolution without a close look at the Taung Child – a 2.8-million-year-old skull, belonging to a three-year-old, ten-kilogram *Australopithecus africanus*, and arguably the most important find in the hominid fossil record. Close examination of the skull reveals that it was positioned directly above the spine, indicating an upright posture – a trait shared with humans, but no other primates. Thus, the Taung Child represents our earliest departure from our primate cousins and offers a view into the life of our ancestors. More fascinating than how it lived, at least to this falconer, is how it died. A giant jungle eagle, the equivalent of a modern-day crowned eagle, caught and killed the Taung Child. We know this because there are several tell-tale talon holes in the skull and subtle beak scrapes in the orbits, from

the eagle extracting tiny morsels. Though it was at first thought that a leopard was the culprit, when the skull was compared with dozens of primate skulls from the nests of crowned eagles, the result was conclusive. This is significant because the predators that stalked our ancestors inevitably shaped our evolution, and birds of prey may have been one of the most significant selective forces. Forest eagle predation may have contributed to selective pressure for the larger body mass and larger brains of early hominids. It means that eagles were a driving force in our evolution. Put shortly, we are who we are, because of eagles!

The tale of the Taung Child is what first sparked my fascination with crowned eagles, and a desire to see one flown in its native habitat. For me, there is something special about flying a native eagle in its native habitat on its native prey – that is my own personal pinnacle of falconry. I've long flown golden eagles on the prairie and in the mountains on hares and foxes, but never dabbled in any other eagle species. And though humanity has a several-thousand-year connection with golden eagles, the pull of the crowned, and its few-million-year-old association with humans, proved irresistible.

Few falconers in southern Africa seriously hunt crowned eagles. Andre Groenewald of Zimbabwe flew a female crowned eagle, the famous 'Lundi', successfully on vervet monkeys for many, many years. I was not able to hunt with Andre, but I soon arrived in Kimberley, South Africa to visit Steven on his farm and watch his crowned eagle fly.

Steven is very humble when it comes to his accomplishments with his eagle (take note for the previous section!), and I was nothing but impressed. We first headed out to hunt springhares at night, an endeavor short on challenge for an experienced eagle, but full of fun, experience for the eagle, and filling the freezer. The springhare (*Pedetes capensis*) is,



Lauren McGough



in summary, a 2-3-kilo kangaroo rat. It was great fun to watch them hop along in the evening, and to watch the eagle pursue them with vigor.

The real challenge was hunting steenbok antelope (*Raphicerus campestris*) during the day. As these animals have evolved in such a predator-rich environment, they are eminently capable of outmaneuvering eagles. I have hunted roe deer with golden eagles in Europe, and that flight is characteristically a point-to-point flight where the challenge to the eagle lies in hanging on to its quarry. This was nothing like that. This was like a hare flight. The steenbok stopped, started, turned on a dime – it was as if I was watching a 12-kilo hare with an eagle on its tail! That is only to brag on the steenbok, the eagle itself...phew! I go through great effort to make certain my golden eagles are fit and love to marvel at their speed on a hare. But a crowned – this eagle has another gear entirely. His sheer speed in blasting off the fist in pursuit of quarry left me open-mouthed in the field. I could not believe how quickly he caught up with the bounding steenbok.

The crowned traded off his kills beautifully for Steven, certainly a result of Steven's patience and consistency. I marveled at the savviness of the troops of vervet monkeys that roamed the area. They are not a quarry to

be trifled with, nor one to be easily outwitted. Indeed, Andre in Zimbabwe had rigged up a giant hood for Lundi in the back of his truck that he could open while driving – that way she could immediately begin to work a troop before the alarm call could be sounded and they disappeared into the forest.

Compared with a golden eagle, the crowned typically weighs half a kilo to a kilo less, but its tarsi are far thicker, and its foot strength far superior. They are an incredible avian predator. Although their mature plumage may appear striking or extravagant when tethered to a falconer's block, in the canopy they are invisible. Shane McPherson kindly took me to visit active crowned eagle nests in the city of Durban, and I was astounded at how easily the parents receded from sight when perched against a forested background. Although I am used to red-tailed hawks populating urban areas in the United States, it was astonishing to think of this eagle hidden among the literal urban jungles of Durban – some nests were only a hundred meters from suburban backgardens.

This is not an eagle typically flown in Africa, nor should it be. But for the dedicated and careful, I can say that it is an absolute pleasure to watch this eagle own the veld.

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# HIDDEN TREASURES: PRIVATELY OWNED MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS ON FALCONRY AND HUNTING

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## Abstract

For the medieval period (500-1500 AD), we are currently aware of 491 manuscripts in Latin or vernacular languages which contain treatises on falconry and hunting; this is a considerable amount, which shows the social and cultural importance of this activity in medieval society. Of these manuscripts, as far as we know, no less than 33 volumes are in private collections, a rather high proportion of seven per cent of the preserved manuscripts. They represent hidden treasures, since they are not described in printed catalogues and are not accessible through public institutions. Some owners have enabled the author to have access to them, which results in a first overview of this confidential heritage.

This paper starts with an introduction into the production, the conservation, and the collection of medieval hunting manuscripts. After this, some examples of volumes that are privately owned are presented: a single manuscript of the Latin translation of two Arabic treatises on falconry, several of the 21 French private manuscripts, some of them being lavishly illustrated, and a few treatises in Spanish, Catalan, Italian and English.

Books about hunting have always attracted bibliophiles, some of them hunters themselves. These manuscripts have a quality of layout, material and illustration which makes them illustrious and refined, and they are fascinating by their subject and their illustration.

## Medieval manuscripts: a reserved patrimony

Throughout the thousand years of the European Middle Ages, from 500 to 1500, books were produced as individual artefacts, written by hand on vellum or, from the 13th century onwards, also on paper. They required an abundance of material: parchment made from specially prepared skins of sheep or calves, reed

pens or quills from bird feathers, ink from vegetable or mineral substances, and unique pigments for the decoration. But above all, they required time, for scribes writing a few pages a day in carefully traced letters (fig. 1), for artists painting miniatures in the spaces left blank by the scribes, for binders fabricating strong bindings with leather spines and wooden boards, sometimes covered by precious metal.

Manuscript books were important belongings, they were kept in closed cupboards or chests in the abbeys, cathedrals, schools and courts; librarians cared for them and restored them when needed. In churches, they were valued as treasures when they were old and precious illuminated. During the late Middle Ages, the production and use of manuscripts became more widespread, when burghers, physicians, masters and students could own some prayer books, teaching manuals or practical collections. But even then, manuscripts stayed valuable, their fate was precisely fixed in testaments, they were described in the lists of properties established after the death of wealthy noblemen or princes.

Many thousands of medieval manuscripts have survived until this day, kept in the largest historical library which is the Vatican Library in Rome (ca 65,000), and in national libraries such as the British Library in London,



Fig. 1. Scribe at work, Flanders, 15<sup>th</sup> c. (Brussels, KBR, ms. 9278-80, f. 10)

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the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels, or the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna. Local public libraries sometimes have rich holdings of manuscripts, and in some countries, medieval institutions such as abbeys or university colleges still keep their historical library. Manuscript books are, however, a silent patrimony, preserved by public libraries in special collections with limited access, where researchers may consult them on demand. Now and then, the public-at-large gets a glimpse of them through exhibitions displaying selected volumes, opened at a double page under a protected showcase. Fortunately nowadays, more and more manuscripts are digitized and accessible on the Internet. But on the whole it remains rather a matter of specialists.

### The search for privately owned manuscripts

If medieval manuscripts in public libraries are a somewhat confidential cultural heritage, it is even more the case for manuscripts that are privately owned. Since the dawn of modern times, when they ceased to be read and became items for collectors, medieval manuscripts have been gathered by wealthy individuals who bought them at auctions and passed them on to their descendants, who then either kept or sold them. Manuscripts of treatises on hunting and falconry, because they were often illuminated with painted scenes (fig. 2), were a favoured item for private owners.

Some individuals had special cynegetic interest, such as the French chief veterinarian Jean-Baptiste Huzard (1755-1839, sales catalogue of his library in Paris, 1843) or baron Jérôme Pichon (1812-1896, sales catalogue in 1897), a distinguished bibliophile who owned *inter alia* a 15th-century copy of Frederick II's treatise on falconry. The English baronet Thomas Phillipps (1792-1872) assembled in his castle at Middlehill, later on transferred to Cheltenham, a renowned library housing more than 20,000 manuscripts on all possible subjects, certainly the largest private library of this kind ever. He had a concise catalogue of them published in 1871, and his holdings were dispersed during numerous sales by Sotheby's from 1893 to 1946 and by Robinson from 1948 to 1953, continuously nourishing the market of precious manuscripts, among which several volumes were on hunting. A particularly rich hunting library was gathered by the German merchant Richard Schwerdt (1862-1939) and his wife Mathilde (1869-1948?), living



Fig. 2. Latin translation of the Arabic treatise of Moamin, Italy, ca 1300 (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Hofjagd- und Rüstkammer, K 4984, f. 25v)

in London and later on in Alresford. The catalogue of their library, published in four volumes in 1928, is a monument of erudition. Six sales dispersed the collection from 1939 to 1946. In France, a fine collection of manuscripts and ancient books on hunting was owned by Henri Gallice (1854-1930) in Epernay, and was bought *en bloc* by the industrialist Marcel Jeanson (1885-1942) in Paris (fig. 3). He conceded liberal access to scholars such as Gunnar Tilander (1918-1973), who also owned a few hunting manuscripts. Forty-five years after Jeanson's death, the sale of his hunting library in 1987 by Sotheby's Monaco was the latest opportunity to see a large number of hunting manuscripts at auction: no less than 16 medieval manuscripts changed hands on this occasion and are described in a prestigious printed catalogue.

For scholars, privately owned manuscripts are hardly accessible. They can remain hidden for decades, before showing up at an auction, and some of them appear without having ever been signalled in any sales catalogue. Consulting numerous sales catalogues is a time-consuming duty and is complicated due to the difficult availability of these catalogues, but substantial help is now offered on the internet through the Schoenberg Database housed at Pennsylvania University Library. To specialist researchers, some private owners





Fig. 3. Ex-libris of Henri Gallice and of Marcel Jeanson in a ms. of an Italian treatise on sparrowhawks, Italy, 16<sup>th</sup> c. (Private collection, Thomas Scheler bookseller, Paris, 2011)

generously grant access to their manuscripts, many of them, however, do not. During the past 20 years, some opportunities have been offered to me, so I have been able to examine 12 volumes, and to gather information on 21 more. A total of 33 privately owned hunting manuscripts are thus known to date, but no doubt a few others remain ignored. This article sheds light on these hidden treasures, and it is hoped that it will enable further discoveries.

#### A Latin manuscript of two Arabic treatises

On the whole, some 75 Latin manuscripts on falconry are known today, but only one of them remains privately owned. It is one of the many copies of the Latin translation of two Arabic treatises, the *Ghatrif* and the *Liber Moamin falconarii*, the “Book of Moamin the falconer” (fig. 4).

These two treatises were translated into Latin at the demand of Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen in the year 1241, and were frequently copied afterwards, especially the *Moamin*, which became one of the favourite falconry treatises in Italy until the end of the Middle Ages. This manuscript was written in Italy in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, in a nice humanistic cursive hand, but it has no illustrations, and in fact it was not finished, for it lacks the ornate initials which were foreseen and left blank. It was sold at the Jeanson sale of 1987 (Nr 565). It is in fact a direct copy of a volume preserved in the Bibliotheca Trivulziana of Milan (ms. 695), realized for a member of the Borromeo family. Only two Latin manuscripts of the *Moamin* are illustrated. The one preserved in Vienna (fig. 2), a splendid volume on parchment adorned with 101 initials depicting birds,

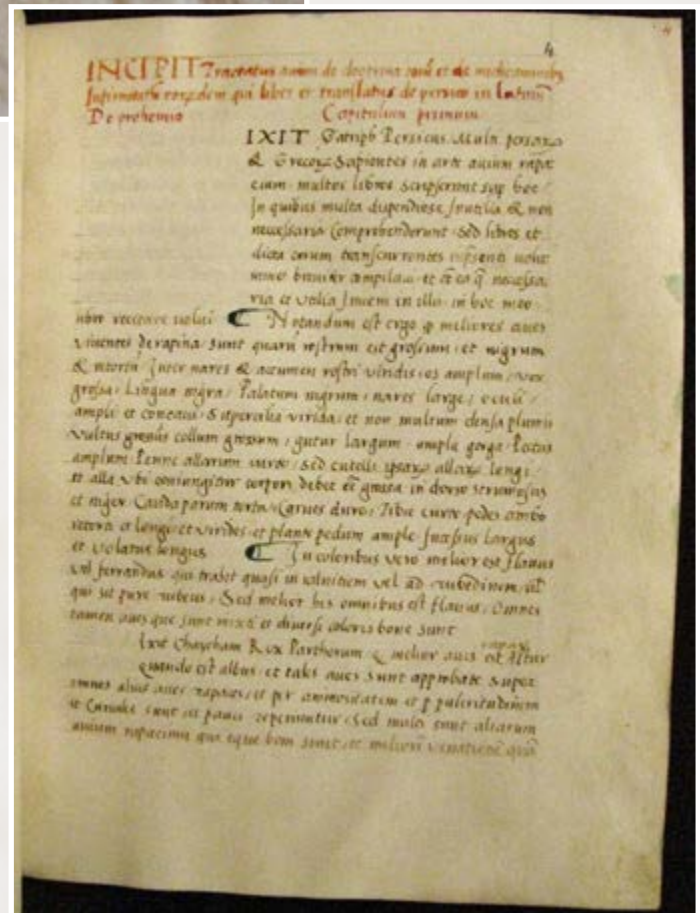


Fig. 4. Title page of a copy of the *Moamin*, Italy, late 15<sup>th</sup> c. (Private collection, Sotheby's Monaco sale, 28.02.1987, Nr 565)

falconers and dogs with a lavish use of gold will soon be reproduced in facsimile by the renowned Austrian publisher ADEVA (Graz); I am currently writing the commentary volume of this prestigious publication. Another illustrated manuscript of the *Moamin*, preserved at the library of the Musée Condé at Chantilly, was realized in 1459 for the duke of Milan Francesco Sforza, and has refined paintings of birds and dogs in the margins, as well as two full-page miniatures.



### The rich medieval tradition in French

Most of the 32 privately owned hunting manuscripts are in French, which is no wonder, considering that the medieval French tradition is the richest in this field, with a total of 181 hunting manuscripts preserved. No less than 21 French manuscripts are in private collections. Some are quite modest, such as a small volume sold in 2002 by the Brussels antiquarian, The Romantic Agony (sale 22-23rd November 2002, Nr 133), and now in the hands of a Belgian specialist of hunting literature. It contains a hitherto unknown French treatise on the medical care of falcons written in Southern France in the middle of the 15th century, and it has the peculiarity of being a personal working copy of the scribe, who deleted and corrected some words as he was writing, thus providing some insight into the redaction of his work. Also, interesting is the fact that the paper leaves show triple traces of folding, which means that this thin manuscript might originally have been a kind of memento of a falconer, folded in order to fit into his pocket (fig. 5).

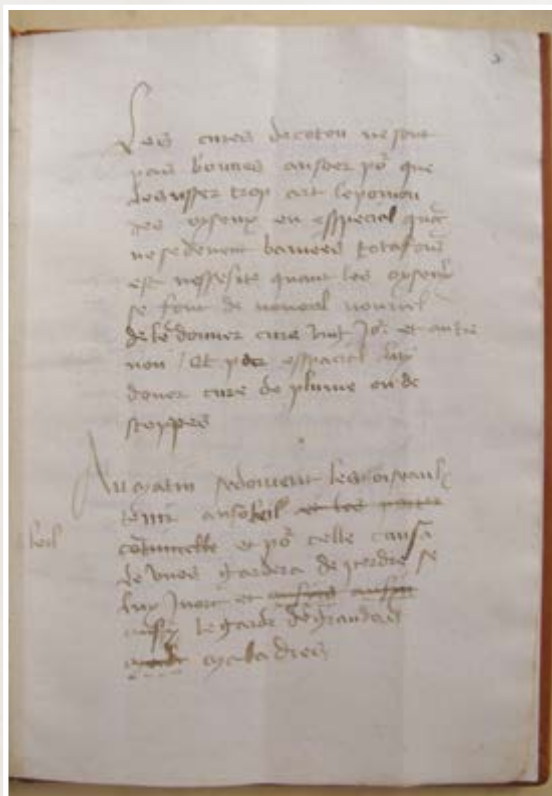


Fig. 5. Anonymous French treatise on falconry, Southern France, 15<sup>th</sup> c. (Private collection, Romantic Agony sale, Brussels, 22-23.11.2002, Nr 133)



Fig. 6. Presentation of the treatise of Jean de Francières to the Master of the Order of St-John, France, dated 1480 (Private collection, Sotheby's Monaco sale, 28.02.1987, Nr 462)

More often one encounters fair copies, some of them distinctly luxurious. The Jeanson sale of 1987 included five exceptional illuminated manuscripts on vellum: three copies of the *Livre de chasse* of Gaston Fébus (Nr 459 – acquired by the Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles – and Nr 460 and Nr 462), one of the *Livre des deduis* of Gace de la Buigne (Nr 247), and one of the *Bon varlet de chiens*, a text based on Fébus (Nr 464). The third Fébus manuscript contains also the falconry treatise of Jean de Francières, a text written about the middle of the 15th century at Rhodes by this prominent member of the military order of the Hospital of St-John. The manuscript is dated 1480 and presents 85 miniatures, among which are eight for the falconry part (fig. 6).

Three other copies of Jean de Francières' text are known to be privately owned, among which is one that belonged to the great specialist of medieval German treatises on falconry, Professor Kurt Lindner (1906-1987) who had created in Bamberg a magnificent research library on the history of hunting, dispersed at auction in 2003 and 2004. His Francières manuscript is now in the hands of a distinguished German falconer and bibliophile.



### The “Livre du Roi Modus”

In the Jeanson sale, one relatively modest copy of the *Livre du Roi Modus et de la Reine Ratio* was offered for sale (Nr 221); it is illustrated with 41 simple drawings of hunting scenes. It is a late 16th century copy of this treatise written circa 1370 by the Norman nobleman Henri de Ferrières about hunting and falconry. This text adopts the format of a dialogue between King Modus (the Good manner) and his pupils, about what has to be known by huntsmen and falconers; his wife Ratio, the personification of Reason, now and then offers some allegorical comments on the deeper significance of the animals and actions. The *Modus* treatise has enjoyed a lasting success, with no less than 39 manuscripts preserved, which is quite high for a medieval French text. This treatise has the peculiarity of having been conceived as an illustrated text by its author; hence most of the manuscripts contain bright miniatures of hunting scenes or devices and traps (fig. 7).

Recently, a previously unknown copy of this text was put up for auction by Bonham's in New York (sale of 15th December 2009, Nr 5196): it is a neat but sober 15th century manuscript without illustrations. Furthermore, I have identified and examined a second previously unknown copy in the archives of the duke of Croy in the German city of Dülmen; this 15th century copy had been planned as an illustrated manuscript, but



Fig. 8. Modus teaching the art of falconry to his pupils, ms. of the *Livre du Roi Modus*, France, 15<sup>th</sup> c. (Private collection, Aguttes sale 10.10.2001, Nr 109)

the spaces left open for the painter have not been filled in. It could indeed happen that a manuscript was left unfinished, if the patron ran out of money, or for other reasons.

A fourth private copy of *Modus* was sold in Neuilly near Paris by the auction house Aguttes (sale of 10th October 2001, Nr 109), originating from the Jeanson collection but not included in the Monaco sale of 1987. It has a most interesting cycle of 63 watercolour illustrations, which should be studied in comparison with other manuscripts of the text (fig. 8). As was reported to me, it was bought by a Qatari official for a future museum, but has not been accessible since. It would be a major breakthrough if this manuscript could be made available for future research.



Fig. 7. Falconers training a falcon with the creance, ms. of the *Livre du Roi Modus*, France, end of the 14<sup>th</sup> c. (Torino, Archivio di Stato, J. b. 2. 18)



### French texts of the beginning of the 16th century

Other French treatises on falconry that are privately owned include a set of four magnificent miniatures illustrating the versified treatise of Guillaume Cretin about the preeminence of falconry or hunting, the *Debat entre deux dames sur le pasetemps des chiens et des oiseaux* (Jeanson sale, Nr 157). One of these was acquired shortly after the sale by the Museum of Art at Cleveland, and another of the four pages was purchased in 2011 by the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

Finally, let us turn to a spectacular reappearance. During the 19th century, marquis Lazare-Alfred de Clapiers possessed at Marseille the unique manuscript of a treatise on falconry written by Jacques de Léon at the beginning of the 16th century, but since then it had remained hidden and no one knew its whereabouts. In 2011, while I was working in the United States on a private collection, this very manuscript came into my



Fig. 9. Emblem and signature of the scribe Vincent Philippon in the treatise of Jacques de Léon, Provence, 1512 (Private collection, Drouot Auction of 19.12.1986, Nr 81)



Fig. 10. Bird of prey with cauteries and explanations in the Jacques de Léon ms.

hands, and I was permitted to describe and photograph it; it had, in fact, passed at the 19 December 1982 auction organized by Drouot in Paris. It is a most elegant small volume signed and dated 1512 by the scribe Vincent Philippon (who is known to have copied other treatises on falconry). It bears the figurative emblems of the scribe on the last page (fig. 9) and the arms of the Léon family on its front page. It also includes a drawing of a falcon surrounded by twelve cauteries and explanations as to the places where to cauterize the bird, i.e. where to apply the hot iron end of the cautery in order to burn the surface of the tissues (fig. 10). This healing method that horrifies present-day falconers was common in the medieval West and is still practised on falcons in some regions of Asia. The Jacques de Léon treatise was printed in 1643 on the basis of this manuscript, and the engraving reproduces the drawing in all details.

### Hunting manuscripts from the Iberian Peninsula and Italy

Manuscripts of hunting treatises in other languages exist in smaller numbers than the Latin and French treatises, and there are a few known to be privately



owned. Seven of the 72 Iberian manuscripts are in that category, with three copies of Pero Lopez de Ayala's Spanish treatise, three Catalan manuscripts and one in Portuguese. The unique 15th century manuscript of the Catalan falconry treatise of Antonio de Vilaragut, *Llibre de cetreria*, passed at auction in a 2003 Aguttes sale (fig. 11), coming from the Gallice and Jeanson libraries (sale of 15th January 2003, Nr 80). It was apparently also bought by the Qatari official, and it would be highly important for the scientific community if this volume could be studied. My Spanish and Catalan colleagues would rejoice immensely if this could happen.

I have come across only two Italian hunting manuscripts in private collections and could examine both of them. The first one is a small 16th century vellum manuscript of an anonymous treatise on sparrowhawks in 66 chapters copied in an elegant humanistic cursive hand and enhanced by a dozen red pencil drawings; it was offered for sale by bookseller Thomas Scheler in Paris, who was so kind as to let me examine it in 2011 (fig. 12). The text is based on extracts from the large Italian treatise by Pietro Belbasso da Vigevano, which is

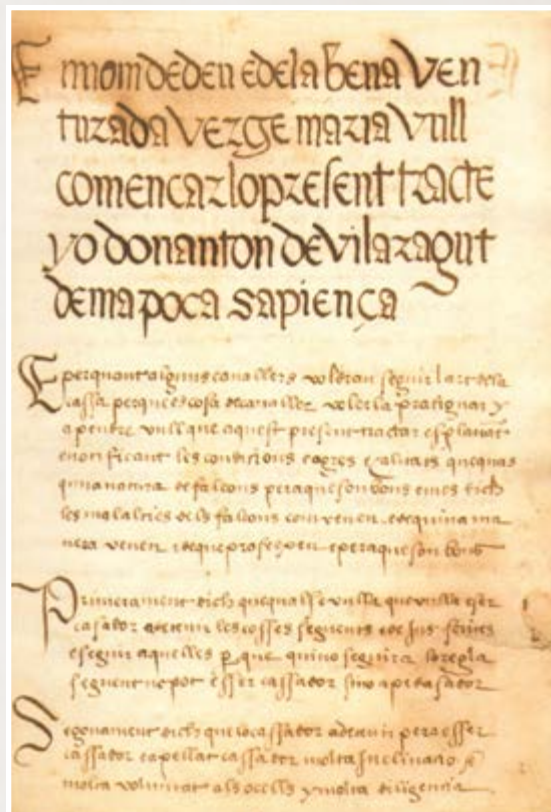


Fig. 11. Manuscript of the Catalan falconry treatise of Antonio de Vilaragut, Catalonia, 15<sup>th</sup> c. (Private collection, Aguttes sale 15.01.2003, Nr 80)



Fig. 12. Italian treatise on sparrowhawks, North Italy, 16th c. (Private collection, Thomas Scheler bookseller in 2011, Paris)

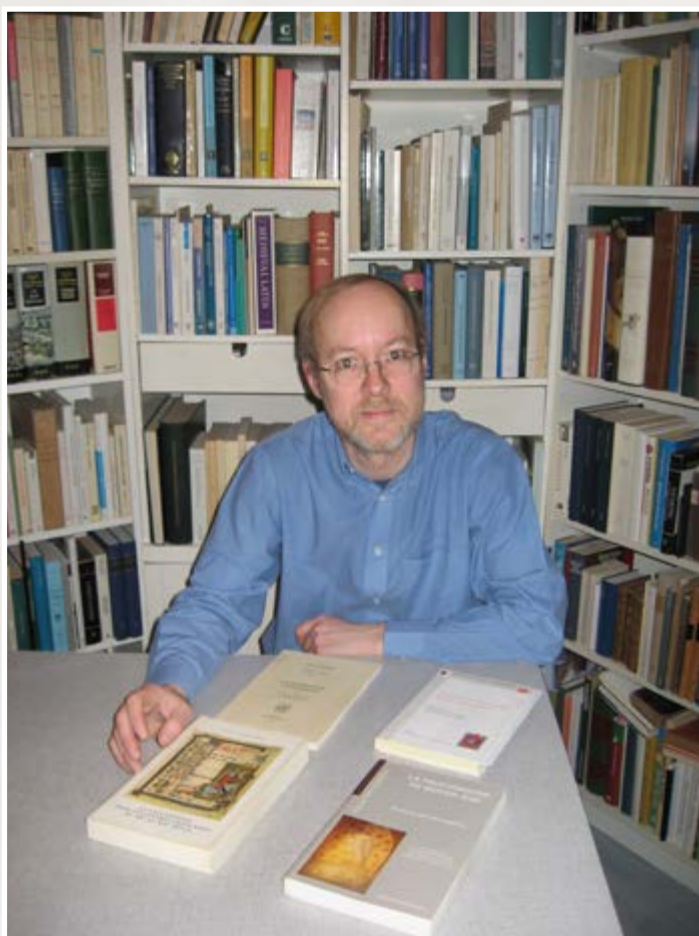


still unedited. The second manuscript concerns hunting dogs and horses, and was written by Battista Guarino for a member of the Este court at Ferrara in the 1460's; it has been edited recently by Gianluca Valenti.

### A few English manuscripts

Four private English hunting manuscripts have been signalled recently. The sale of the library of the Duke of Gloucester in 2006 brought to light three 15th century volumes, two of them adorned with some fine miniatures, which is a rare feature in medieval English hunting manuscripts (sale Christie's, London, 26/27th January 2006, Nr 501, 502, 503). A fourth manuscript is of William Twiti's treatise on venery and has apparently been lost by the owner, an estate in Ashton-under-Lyne. As to other languages, as far as I know there are no German or Netherlandish manuscripts of hunting treatises that are privately owned.

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Baudouin Van den Abeele in the library

So what is the general picture? For the whole medieval period, we know there are currently 491 manuscripts in Latin or vernacular languages containing falconry and hunting treatises. This may appear as a relatively modest figure compared to manuscripts of bibles, books of Hours, sermons collections, encyclopaedias, Aristotelian texts, medical literature, etc. But within the category of medieval technical literature, of which far fewer manuscripts have come down to us, it is a considerable amount, which shows the social and cultural importance of falconry and venery in medieval society. Our inquiry has yielded a total of 33 privately owned volumes, a rather high proportion of seven per cent of the preserved manuscripts. Books on hunting have always attracted bibliophiles, some of them hunters themselves, but not necessarily. These manuscripts have a quality of layout, material and illustration which makes them precious and refined, and they remain intriguing by their subject. They call up the fascination of medieval courtly society, and they introduce us into subtle distinctions about birds of prey and techniques that have remained much the same throughout the centuries.

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# PARTRIDGE HUNTING IN POLAND

*by Elisabeth Leix*

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Many thanks to Bruce Haak for correcting my English version.)*

My eight-year-old peregrine tiercel, Bryan, was fatally injured in an accident during a hunting trip in October of 2013. Two weeks later, I jumped over a pasture fence while crow hawking with my goshawk and injured my right knee. Thus, my hunting season of 2013/2014 ended abruptly, barely as it had begun. Knee surgery, followed by a long healing process, gave me a lot of time to think about whether it would make sense to train a new peregrine on partridge for the coming season. Friends and other hunters complained of a drastic decline in our game bird populations, especially of partridge, and I seriously considered only chasing crows with my tiercel goshawk, Sunny, the following season. In a telephone call with my Polish friends, we talked about the usual things: our upcoming peregrine release project, and the status of game birds. Among other

things, I expressed my concerns about starting a young peregrine falcon. Henjo, our friend, a falconer, and volunteer from the project, attempted to dispel these misgivings, by telling me that there were still some areas where partridges could be found. In the course of the conversation, the crucial question arose: would it be possible for my husband, Klaus, and I to hawk in one of these areas? In less than 48 hours, I had the local hunter on the phone and quickly realized that we could go for two weeks in September with our peregrines to pursue partridge in Poland.

Armed with new information and opportunities, I felt comfortable about accepting a generous offer from Christian Saar to fly a young peregrine from his breeding project. Since I knew some of these were attractive and, above all, high-flying falcons I was eagerly awaiting the

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Elisabeth Leix







breeding season. Finally, at the beginning of May, I got the good news that three peregrines had hatched. I was hoping that there would be at least one tiercel for me. On June 7th, the time had come. I collected the falcon at 35 days of age from Hamburg, and put him with two tiercels and a female in the hacking place within the barn in front of our house.

The weeks following the fledging of these falcons were the most beautiful of the year. Curiously, it is a bit like bringing wild peregrines into the garden for an exciting albeit brief time. The enthusiasm of their hunting exercises, which increased their fitness from soft fledgling falcons into fast pursuers of avian prey, pushed all of our upcoming work into the background.

This became another interesting chance to train both young and old peregrines on the hexacopter (drone) near our property. The four hacked falcons did not show any fear of the aircraft. On the contrary, they were curious about it and flew some attack flights on the attached pigeon wing.

After nearly four weeks at hack, the time had come to end the hack. By now, only this tiercel and the falcon remained at liberty. Although we felt that the female could be left out longer, we decided to capture both birds. Leaving a single falcon at hack can be risky. Plus, the tiercel was already showing surprisingly good flights and his excursions from home were getting longer. Thankfully, when the time came, Klaus shouldered the task of capturing the bird for me. In less than an hour, this fine peregrine stood on my fist and harbored no bad associations with me personally. Oh my goodness, how beautiful he was: a compact, powerful, and bright falcon. I was delighted to train another young peregrine but also sobered by the realization that this hawk was special in his way. As it turned out, he was unexpectedly stubborn and I made slow progress with him initially. Klaus, who trained an unhacked tiercel at the same time, was always two steps ahead of me. My optimism suffered daily, as it became evident that this student would require two or three weeks of training prior to being turned loose.

Eventually, the day of the first free flight arrived. I think every falconer knows the feeling of this adventure and, especially with this falcon, I was particularly unsure. It was not easy to evaluate his attitude. He was strikingly reserved, and the invisible bond between us had not yet been knotted. Although he accepted the lure and tolerated me, I mounted new batteries into a powerful transmitter, cautionary steps before daring the next step. With a daily weight of 620 g at summer temperatures, I was worried that this bird would climb powerfully into the blue sky and ignore the lure. That the opposite would happen, that the tiercel would fall into a kind of begging flight, would not have occurred to me in







my wildest dreams. I was speechless and could not explain this behavior. After his weight rose up to 660 g, he showed no noticeable improvement. Therefore, I decided to fly him in the updraft of a mountain slope, which finally brought the decisive, positive turn in his progress. After a few laps, he topped the trees and found lift. Upon reaching the top of the slope, he climbed easily and higher into the wind.

In time, I named the tiercel Frodo because his big eyes reminded me of the character from the *Lord of the Rings* movies. From below, I enthusiastically watched Frodo soar high into the white-blue sky employing a minimal change of wing position. After a while, I went out from the foot of the slope into the open field. A quick signal with the glove was enough, and Frodo pulled straight over me. With a dead pigeon, I safely ended his first high flight. From this day forward, our daily training went steeply uphill, in the truest sense of the word.

By the start of the season, Klaus had trained a young peregrine tiercel and our daughter, Laura, had re-trained Butzi, her tiercel from the previous year. These three tiercels, a substitute tiercel from the previous year, and a female from the hack destined for a friend, were to be our hunting companions in Poland. Unfortunately, Laura had to attend her falconry class in Bavaria, and could not make the hunting trip. However, she entrusted us

with Butzi, along with a request to catch some partridge with him. We started our eastward (1,200 km) drive in mid-September with rainy weather and almost autumn temperatures. The closer we got to Poland, the friendlier the weather became. There was blue sky at Katowice and, here, I enjoyed a familiar landscape. I have a deep affection for, and connection with, Poland's lovable people and natural beauty. The farther east we went, the smaller the fields became. Shortly before we reached our destination, the village parcels appeared to be only 10 m wide and 200 m long. Almost every one of these strips was separated by approximately a 30 cm field border. In some cases, it was difficult to see what crop was being cultivated in the narrow plots. About 1:00 pm we reached our destination. Jarek, the local huntsman, welcomed us at the hunting lodge that would be our temporary home. A large, new building hidden in the forest, it included both a fenced lawn with enough room for the falcons and a nice place to barbeque.

The first chore was to put the falcons out to weather. They were visibly glad to take a bath. Aska, my 12-year-old German Shorthaired Pointer bitch, and Klaus' four-year-old English Pointer bitch, Dea, inspected the property as we did our accommodation. The house was simply decorated and our quarters included a fireplace in the living room, which served to revive our spirits in the evening.





Klaus Leix

Jarek quickly showed us the boundaries of the 11,000 hectare property on a map, then disappeared to attend to other guests. We arranged to meet Jarek the next morning to explore the area by car. For today, however, we must rely on our instinct and experience to locate quarry. When asked where partridge could be found for the first warm-up flight, Jared simply said: "They are everywhere!"

About 4:30 pm, after our belongings were unloaded and stowed away and the falcons dry and motivated, we began looking over the district. Because I still limped from the accident, we made a plan. Klaus would search with Dea at an already partly harvested potato field and I would drive to the next crossroad and look by car for partridge or walk close to the car with Aska. About 800 m down the road, I pulled slowly into the next farm. I was looking for suitable habitat and hoping to spot the heads of partridge that were foraging in the fields. Lost in thought, I caught movement in a stubble field out the corner of my eye. Looking through the binoculars, my wish came true as I saw about 20 small partridge heads moving in the field. Only the old cock of the covey posed proudly like a statue on a small mound of earth to keep lookout. Under a spell, we

stared at each other through the optics. Immediately, I shifted into reverse and drove slowly back to the road. I was so excited; the first partridge in only 10 minutes. This was indeed a good sign!

As quickly as possible, I collected Klaus and Dea, and then parked the car at a safe distance from our quarry. After visually locating the covey again, I walked behind the car and released Frodo. We understandably had high expectations of Frodo, encouraged by his recent flying demonstrations. However, his flight was a real disappointment. Frodo made no attempt to mount. Instead, he sailed over a small valley, and sought in vain for uplift from the plain. Although I knew that he would not be successful, I flushed the covey and thirty partridge poured out of the stubble field. Frodo was visibly irritated and, after a brief hesitation, he turned into a slanted stoop. Although he tried, he was unable to reach the speeding covey before they dropped into a weedy potato field in the distance. Annoyed, I lured Frodo down and left the next chance for Klaus and Carlo.

Carlo had shown excellent climbing qualities at home. Upon release, he thrust himself fiercely from the fist, displaying a zeal for flying that Frodo had not. Quickly, Carlo gained height but remained off at an angle, with a tendency to drift away. Dea was pointing at the edge of the field and Klaus did not hesitate long to flush while Carlo was still in decent position. In a huge slanted stoop he shot towards the partridge, which dumped into the next weedy field before he could reach them. Because Carlo had a strong desire to hunt pigeons and other birds, Klaus immediately lured him to avoid flushing the covey again. After dinner, we strategized with a bottle of wine in front of the fireplace and forged plans for the upcoming days.



The next morning we peered into a cloudless blue sky. The accompanying mild temperatures prophesied a wonderful late-summer day. We enjoyed the warming rays of the sun and reverent silence, broken only by the soft rustling of fallen leaves. After a hearty breakfast, Jarek picked us up for a tour of the hawking grounds. The area included about 2,000 hectares of forest. Small-structured fields with various crops dominated the area and were interspersed with small orchards. Unfortunately, many fields remained unseasonably wet due to summer rains, which prevented crops from being harvested. We were concerned that many partridge would be frequenting these overflowing fields, where there was an abundance of food and cover. In addition, Jarek asked us not to search these fields with our dogs due to the potential for additional crop damage for the farmer. We were ultimately relieved to find that there were plenty of partridge to be found by car in other places.

Thanks to my Polish language skills, we were trusted to go alone into the fields and Jarek gave us a free rein to use the whole area for hawking. That morning, we had seen three coveys and found another three that afternoon. Eventually, we had two flights with each tiercel. Although the second day was unsuccessful and we busied ourselves with additional training flights, we remained hopeful that the next day would bring us reasons to celebrate. Meanwhile, it warmed to 29°C and we found three coveys relatively close to one another. This was a perfect opportunity for Carlo. Klaus released him at a reasonable distance from the covey, and I positioned myself near the first covey to flush, if needed, as soon as Carlo was in position above Klaus. Carlo had a short span of attention when in high condition. If too high in weight, he was interested in everything but his job. Quickly, Carlo gained height, but was promptly distracted by passing pigeons. He pressed them with breathtaking stoops, but thank heavens, without success!

Klaus walked far into the field where Carlo could see him. The idea was that after the pigeons had found shelter in the village, the tiercel would return to wait-on above him. After a few minutes, Carlo broke off and came directly over Klaus at good height. Klaus

then flushed the covey beneath him. Carlo dropped like a missile from the sky in a huge stoop. But shortly before impact, the partridge dropped into cover. Carlo went immediately back to waiting-on. Klaus ran in my direction. Lacking patience, Carlo checked off on passing starlings that used fascinating formations to escape his grasp. Since we had released the dogs to find the covey again, Dea was soon pointing at the end of a meadow while Aska also pointed with her nose deep in a crop of rape seed (also called canola). While Aska's pose suggested a hare, I dared not handle her with the potential to accidentally flush a partridge. So I cautiously waited for Klaus to flush the partridge being patiently pointed by Dea. When Carlo finally returned overhead, Klaus didn't wait long and flushed in a favorable moment with a huge scream. Inspired by the shout of my husband, Aska jumped into a hollow, from which a cat departed in an adventurous bound. I was wasting air on my whistle as the dog was nearly deaf. Aska ignored, took pursuit, and came past me running behind the cat. I tried to stop Aska with a great leap, and just caught her on the hind leg. The maneuver effectively prevented me from watching Carlo's stoop. Pegged on the foot of my bitch, prone in a completely twisted position, I tried to catch a glimpse of the flight. From the corner of my eye I could only see him disappearing behind a partridge, while heading





Klaus and Elisabeth Leix

in the direction of a farm. When he did not reappear in the air, I thought that it might have worked. Walking steadily again, with my dog on a leash, we located Carlo with the telemetry receiver. He was about 100 m closer to the next farm and sitting on his first partridge. The ban had been lifted and we were joyful. Finally, we had cause for celebration, as opposed to drinking wine in the evenings out of frustration. By text message, the pressure was building for news of success with Laura's tiercel Butzi. Although the most consistent of all the game hawks, he needed time to adjust to the warm temperatures. He too wanted to use the lift generated by wind and thermals. It's a lazy approach to taking a pitch, created by too often flying near the mountains. However, every day that the hawks had to mount under their own power in the lowlands brought them closer to the desired mental state and physical condition. Butzi had hunting experience from the previous season. While his attitude towards us was reserved, his handling was very pleasant. Butzi got the first flight the following day. We found the big covey from the previous day at almost the same place again. Butzi was released at a reasonable distance from the

partridges and, like the other tiercels, he also drifted away and went up over the hollow. After a few minutes he had reached a good working pitch. When I started to move, he came straight over me. In the interim, Klaus located the partridge with Dea. When the point was solid, I tried to pull Butzi overhead so that Klaus could flush at the right moment. The incredible sight of 30 partridge did not seem to deter Butzi, although he hesitated a moment before starting to stoop. Fortunately, that was the moment he needed to pick the right target. He dropped out the sky, sped toward them, and swung into the covey's path in an effort to pick one out. Skillfully, Butzi bound to a bird, adjusted his grasp in the air, and carried it masterfully to the ground.

It was a textbook capture. Any non-falconer witness, especially one lacking an appreciation for the extreme efforts required to create this moment, might conclude that falconry was quite easy. Naturally, we were thrilled with the outcome but, also, regretted that Laura could not observe it first-hand. Thanks to modern technology, we sent a text and got a prompt response. Smiley-face emojis jumped over the display screen of our mobile phone, and there was no denying the joy on the other side, over 1000 km away. The satisfaction and good mood of our party was captured by Klaus in a beautiful photo that recorded this moment for posterity.

Now only Frodo needed redemption, as he had become the child of sorrow in the group. Sadly, he dealt poorly with the heat and weather doldrums. The best flying time for him was between lunchtime and early afternoon, which put pressure on us to provide a slip at the just the right time. Carlo had developed into a really good hawk, taking three partridge. Butzi was doing fine by relying on previous hunting experience. Although Frodo improved with every unsuccessful flight, things just weren't working for him. On one setup the partridge flushed early and, sometimes, he meandered out of position. Also, I messed up one slip. We were just jinxed.

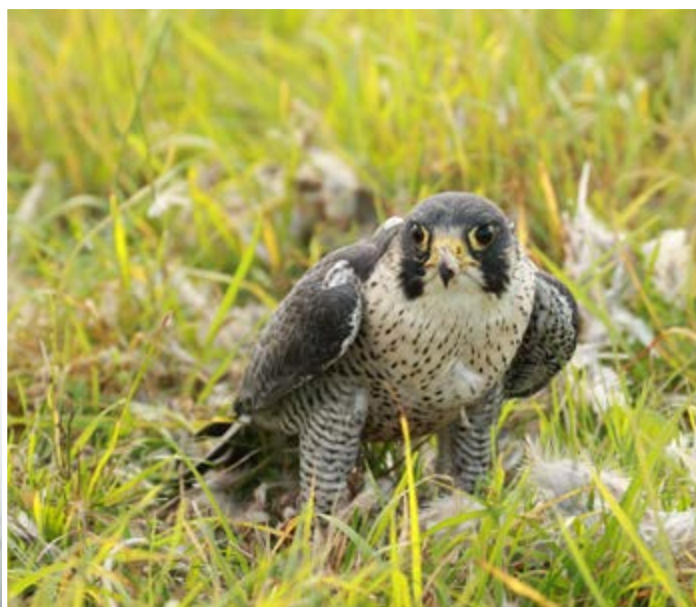


It took us a week to solve the puzzle. Eventually, we found two coveys close together, which proved the ideal opportunity for Frodo. We saw the partridge from the car, as we found most of our slips. Partridge were so plentiful that we routinely found marked coveys and only needed the dogs to point in order to time the flush perfectly. The coveys lay in a strawberry plantation in both the upper and lower parts of the field. Behind us was a planting of young fruit trees and, in front, an open field. To my great pleasure we had some wind and cooler temperatures. I walked a safe distance into the field and removed Frodo's hood. He glanced toward to the village and immediately started chasing pigeons. In the binoculars, we observed Frodo stooping pigeons. Eventually, he went higher and higher into the wind above the village and drifted away. This was a rare situation and I didn't want to track him down with telemetry. So, I tried making Frodo aware of my presence by moving with my dog in the opposite direction of the partridge. During the course of our stay, he had learned that when I'm moving, partridge would soon be flushed.

I had long lost sight of Frodo when Klaus, who was still watching with binoculars, shouted that he had changed his direction and was flying towards me. I whistled Aska back and directed her into the strawberries. It did not take long before she was pointing a covey. I was so excited and told myself again and again: "Just stay calm and do not mess it up! Wait and do not flush the partridge too early!" Thousands of thoughts were racing through my mind when, finally, I saw Frodo at the edge of a white cloud. My mouth was dry and the time seemed to stand still: it seemed like an eternity until Frodo reached the right position above me. The pitch was terrific and I could let nothing go wrong. It had to work! At last, I looked up to find Frodo well placed overhead. I moved in the direction of the dog and heard the whirring wings of flushing partridge. A liberating, visceral cry released my tension, and the view of my

stooping falcon erased all the worries of the previous days. Quickly, the falcon was spied in the binoculars, and I followed the flight in glorious 10-power magnification! At last the fleeing partridge appeared, and with every inch Frodo approached, my heartbeat increased. A hard hit on the last bird in the covey dropped it forcefully to earth. Frodo bled off speed in a steep turn and promptly bound to the partridge on the ground. It was done! This took a load off my mind and joy instantly replaced all of my sorrows.

Unfortunately, we had to leave a few days later. Our planned two-week holiday became only 10 days due to two important appointments. In a perfect world, we would have stayed longer for the hawks. Frodo, especially, would have benefitted from additional time to solidify his hunting experiences. Nevertheless, even this short stay was worthwhile. During this time we consistently flushed partridges under the falcons. This bond of confidence was such that the falcons now relied on us as hunting partners. We experienced fantastic hunting days with wonderful weather in a beautiful landscape. In hopes of continuing where we had left off this season, we reserved the area for three weeks in 2015.





In preparation for a new season, I took Frodo and Butzi from the aviary the following August. Laura was traveling and asked me to start her tiercel early. By this time, Laura had passed her examination and was eagerly awaiting her first season as a “certified falconer.” To lay a solid foundation, I worked hard on Frodo’s pitch and condition. I concluded that Frodo had internalized the hunting process from last year, but that he lacked a consistent flight pattern. In contrast to the previous year, Frodo willingly cooperated with the training regime. After four weeks of intensive physical training, he was in good shape.

In mid-September, we arrived in Poland with the same cadre of tiercels as before: Butzi, Carlo, and Frodo. Although the last season had ended on a conciliatory note with Frodo, the results were far from ideal. We were anxious to see how things might improve this season. Fantastic hunting weather greeted us on the first day. Here we found light winds, clear skies, and lots of partridges. Upon entering a dirt road, we discovered a big covey of partridge running into a small field. Quickly, the car was hidden behind a hedge and, after a brief consultation with Klaus and Laura, I left the car and released Frodo. Effortlessly, he gained height and, after the first lap, he gained a useful pitch.

In the meantime, Klaus and Laura were waiting for my signal to release the dogs. When Frodo had reached a good height and was straight over me, Klaus released Dea: she covered ground quickly and pointed firmly in a beet field. I ran in to flush the partridge but, unfortunately, the old cock went first. Immediately, Frodo left an otherwise favorable position and missed

this bird, while the rest of the covey escaped into a harvested potato field nearby. I voiced frustration with an unfriendly shout, and hoped that Frodo would return to position. The sight of Frodo winging his way back was a great relief. I ran as fast as possible towards the field as Frodo mounted higher and higher. It was wonderful to see how easily he mastered the wind, proof positive that our intensive flight training had paid off! Finally, I reached the field while Frodo hung high above me. The dogs were quartering the field, but it was as if the partridge had been swallowed up by the ground! After what felt like eternity, Dea turned sharply and locked on point in the next field. Out of breath, I ran uphill and as often is the case, the partridge flushed at the moment when the falcon was circling backwards. Frodo stooped hard but the covey reached cover before he arrived. I could have cried! Disappointed with the outcome of this flight, I was nevertheless relieved that Frodo had taken up where we had left off last season. Wishing not to flush the partridge again, I lured him back to me.

Two days later, Frodo took his first partridge of the season from a wonderful soaring flight. Unfortunately Klaus, our designated partridge flusher, demolished his calf muscle in the process, an injury that affected him for the remainder of our trip. From then on, all our falconry failures were on me, as I was reminded that he was not fully operational after injuring himself for my sake! Thus, I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Klaus who sacrifices for me and my falcon, no matter what the living and hunting conditions might be! (Smile)



For Frodo, this was a pivotal lesson in his training. Ultimately, I would spend three wonderful, satisfying, and successful weeks hawking with him. During this time, all the troubles and disappointments of the previous year faded away.

Unfortunately, Butzi continued to be easily distracted when airborne. The many pigeons in Poland were simply too tempting. Likewise, the sunny, warm weather demanded daily adjustments. Laura, like all novice falconers, was learning weight management within the context of her bird's behavior. She'd seen her parents address these problem a thousand times before. But while watching others is one thing, accomplishing the task yourself is altogether different. In this case, experience was to be her teacher. Laura adapted quickly when she saw that small corrective measures focused Butzi's attention. While a generally consistent flier, he rarely made high soaring flights. Quite by accident, we discovered a covey of partridge in a field that was being tilled. While speaking to the farmer, who was on a little break, we heard partridge calling nearby. Klaus searched the field with the binoculars and suddenly said: "I do not believe it, but there are partridge not a hundred meters ahead of us in the field." The conversation promptly stopped and moments later, Butzi was in the air.

It was a day of wind and light drizzle, and Butzi quickly reached a good height. We intended to flush the partridge without a dog, but that didn't work out as expected. It took a long time as Dea pointed and Butzi circled, waiting for a partridge to appear. After we reached Dea, a large covey of more than 20 birds flew across an already caked field, thus offering him the best chance. In a powerful stoop, Butzi swung into the flight path of a partridge, closed the gap, and plucked one from the sky. What a great flight! Laura was overjoyed and Klaus and I nearly burst with pride. Finally, Butzi had fulfilled our expectations, developed into a solid performer, and gave us true cause for celebration!

The postscript of our hawking adventure involves Carlo, our high flier from the previous year. Truthfully, I was envious of this daring and adventurous tiercel from the beginning, due to his great desire to fly. Klaus' experiments to bring out the ultimate performance in Carlo resulted in a dangerous game. From the outset of training, Carlo showed enormous potential, coupled with intense strength and endurance. In hindsight, it was predictable that this story might not end well. There were two major problems. First was that Carlo was not well made to the lure and, second, he was easily distracted by the neighborhood pigeons. After several

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Laura and  
Elisabeth Leix







partridge kills, Carlo caught three pigeons in succession while self-hunting. He quickly became impatient when waiting-on. If Klaus did not flush partridge immediately, or if anything went wrong, Carlo left the hunting party. For a short time, Klaus held him back. But as soon as the flushing process took too long, Carlo was off chasing pigeons. Sometimes, he flew for two hours before returning to the lure.

One option would have been to stop hawking and put him through an intense re-training program. In this manner, a bond with the falconer could be restored. However the temptation of grandiose flights was such that Klaus could not resist. It was bound to happen eventually and, a few days before our departure, Carlo raked off and caught again a pigeon. Although we could track him, we could not reclaim him. During our last two days, Klaus spent almost all his time tracking Carlo. We got news from farmers where he had been seen. But

when we arrived, the only evidence of his existence was pigeon feathers. In the end, Carlo no longer needed us. The allure of small game and pigeons proved too great, and he made his way alone. So, with laughter and some tears, we completed the 2015 partridge season more or less successfully.

It is amazing how differently individual falcons can develop. Sometimes, a disappointing beginner emerges as a fine, veteran game hawk. Conversely, otherwise reliable game hawks morph into mavericks. Careful and diligent attention to detail is the cost of maintaining good game hawks for many seasons.

On the whole, it was a pleasure for the eyes and soul to fly falcons in Poland. Just knowing that there are places where a healthy biodiversity of fauna and flora exists brings me joy. Sadly, it has long disappeared from the part of Germany where we live. Although much has changed in Poland over the last 20 years, my faith lies in the mentality of the people. With their relaxed nature and understanding of both natural systems and the human condition, it makes no sense for Poles to keep their fields obsessively clean, as we do in Germany. When I ask a German farmer, "Why do you still mow the few grasses around the cattle posts?" he answers me, "How does it look!" If I ask a Pole if he would like to mow the grasses around a cattle post, he would say, "This does not bother me anyway!"

My hope for the future is that all of us can see nature as it is: wild, un-manicured, and naturally beautiful. We will return to Poland, the country that has grown in my heart over many years. This is a land of hospitality, lovely people, and beautiful landscapes!

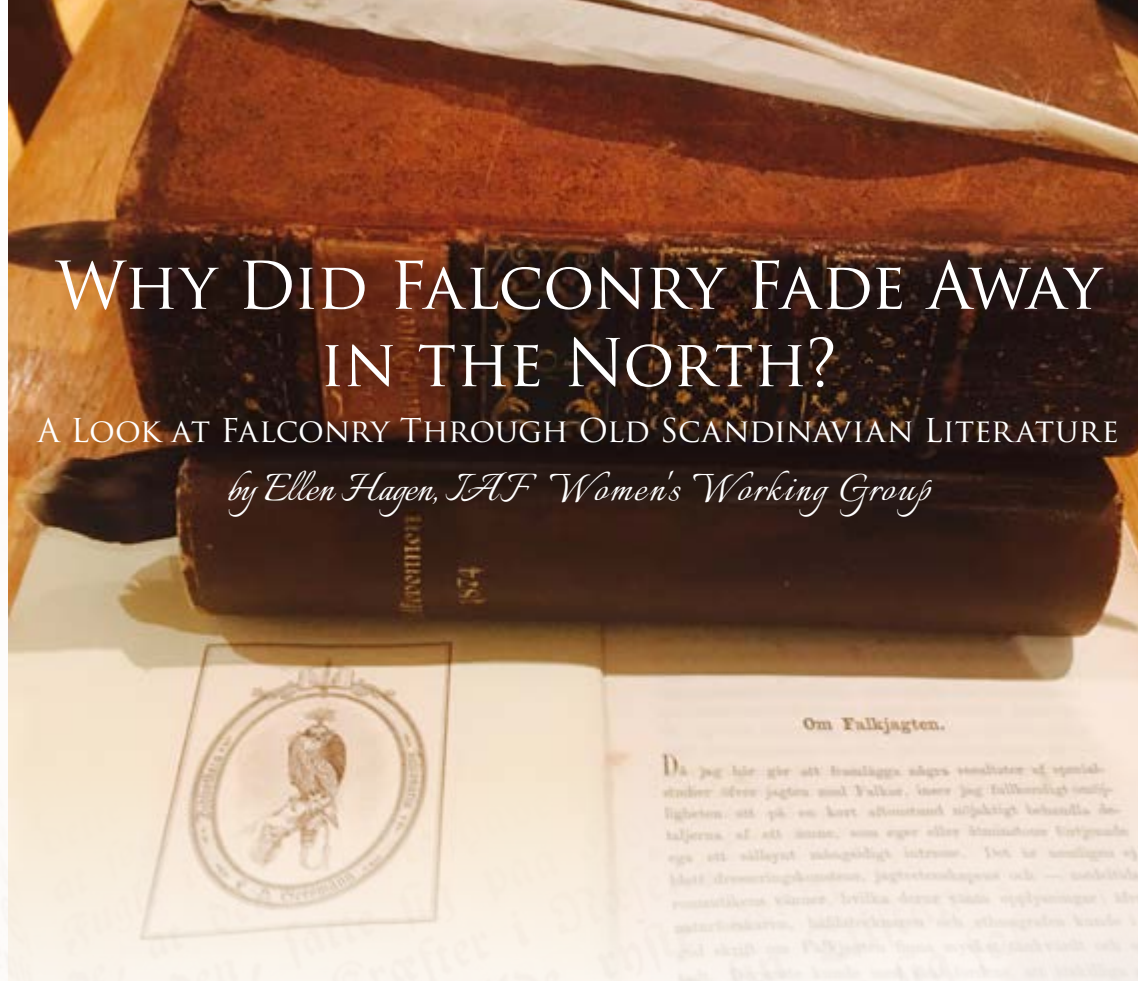




# WHY DID FALCONRY FADE AWAY IN THE NORTH?

A LOOK AT FALCONRY THROUGH OLD SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE

by Ellen Hagen, IAF Women's Working Group



*'As we lack experts to listen to, and as time passes, we allow details to be lost, and succeed in making "a rich subject (falconry) poor".'* Om Falkejagten, 1864, Sweden.

Anyone who practices falconry or has an insight into those practising the sport can understand the dilemma of losing key information about this art. There can be an attitude of 'why look at old falconry literature when there are new books, digital media and modern approaches to falconry methods?' Everything has a history, be it young or old, but sadly that is still not enough to persuade some people to be interested in the past. Hopefully, there will always be a core who, like the old scholars whose texts I examine in this article, remain devoted. It is so important to what we do.

Modern Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden and Denmark) has a strict approach to practicing falconry, with no hawking permitted in these countries. Yet going back the last 200 years in Northern literature, the mentality was completely different. Long-forgotten but reflective scholars wrote about the sport in great detail and even praised it in many ways. Eventually the praise was exchanged for a more burdened view in the second half of the 1900s as 'newer texts' reflected a complete lack of curiosity for falconry or proper knowledge of it. That bad attitude still echoes into modern literature (eg ornithological texts) where falconry is mentioned in relation to illegal falcon-catching.

The fact that first-hand falconry has been missing for so long in these countries has meant that its profile as a

noble heritage has diminished steadily. Heritage plays an important part in Scandinavian identity, and many projects are funded to protect and sustain old traditional activities. Perhaps shedding light on old texts can help spread public awareness of falconry as it did some 200 years ago? Now that more countries are managing to get falconry listed by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind, it is surely time for Scandinavia to present its history of falconry.

The following presentation comes from old books on the subject dating from the period 1788-1874.

## Denmark

A Dane by the name Esias Fleisher wrote books on natural history, and has an entire book on birds that contains a small chapter on falconry, or *'falkejagt'*. Published in Copenhagen in 1796, the book was dedicated to the Danish Queen, Juliane Marie. The book has many descriptions of different birds, including non-native Danish birds such as vultures. In the chapter on falconry, Fleisher makes reference to *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* by Frederick II (*'as I earlier here have quoted Frederick II'*), indicating that he relied on the text when discussing raptors. Furthermore, there are short descriptions of hawking at gazelles as well as cranes and buzzards in Holland, giving a varied presentation of different ways of hunting to the more typical references seen later in Scandinavian literature (such as with eagles in Mongolia).





Fleisher must have either read or known about Julii Firmici's astronomical publications from the third century as he includes Firmici's line about 'a person born under a certain star sign would be destined becoming a hunter and should have dogs and falcons'. This same passage was later used in the Norwegian text *Falkejagten* in 1874. An interesting feature of this well-informed Danish text is a further reference to 'a very fine thesis on falconry in the new collection of the Royal Norwegian Science Society' (also known as DKNVS – Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab). This 'thesis' Fleischer mentions was written by Carl Deichman and is called *Om Falke og Falkejagten* (*On Falcons and Falconry*). It is dated from 1788, and impressively, is available online and free to download due to the fact that the DKNVS has archived all its journals (more of Deichman's text later). Apart from general mentions of both European and historical falcon-harvesting in Norway and the old Norse Kings out hawking, there is similar knowledge shared in all these period books. There is a small description of the falconry mews in Copenhagen, which again points to the text of Carl Deichman, which we will return to later.

### Sweden

Another important text is *Om Falkejagten* (*About Falconry*), which was written by A Quennerstedt from Lund, Sweden, in 1863. This manuscript has kindly been

donated from the incredible falconry collection of the German falconer Karl-Heinz Gersmann. The Swedish text is structurally very similar to the Danish text in that both contain historical insights on falconry right up until the Enlightenment (1537-1800). While this text is the one with the least emphasis on the layperson's practice of falconry in Scandinavia, it nonetheless gives a moving description:

*'As I here present some results of this special study of hunting with falcons, I realize that in such a short time it is impossible to cover the details of such a subject. (...) it deserves to be included in all the aspects it relates to. This (falconry) is not only about the art of the training, the science of hunting and medieval romance that holds information, but nature scientists, drawers and ethnographers could also find a lot of thought-worthy information. (...) As we lack experts to listen to, and as time passes, we allow details to be lost, and succeed in making "a rich subject poor".'*

Indeed, falconry intertwines with several other subjects, as one can see in the lesser-known gem *Falconry as a Motif in Early Swedish Art: Its Historical and Art-Historical Significance*. It was published in 1979 with an academic approach by Gunilla Åkerström-Hougen. It largely covers hunting motifs on runic stones and other Scandinavian motifs with raptors. In the last few years, falconry in Sweden has become even more of a focus in archaeology due to the incredible Iron Age



grave finds containing goshawks, falcons and eagle owls, as well as smaller hawks in some children's and women's graves. As researchers work on the material, it is important that falconers can also share their experience to help understand the sport through the material found.

### Norway

In Norway, there is a text called *Falkejagten* by Prof R Collet that appears in the educational book *Folkevennen* (*Friend of the People*) from 1874. This is a very long and detailed text, and it must be mentioned that reading this old Gothic script was interesting both in terms of language and presentation.

In the beginning of *Falkejagten*, it says: *'This sport has been so widespread and its practice so complex (...) that it most certainly has its own part in cultural history, and falconry, one can almost say has given a whole time period a distinction, has also played a role in the world that has not been insignificant. (...) For hundreds of years, falconry was common at all strongholds and castles among the rich and the wealthy. A deep insight into this sport did, on the same equivalent as sword fighting, riding and dancing, form a significant and necessary part of the upbringing meant for the young princes and nobilities. The actual*

*practice of falconry in Norway has been of a disappearing art (...) the Norwegian mountains have been the home for centuries of falcons and has provided a great number of falcons for the rest of Europe.'*

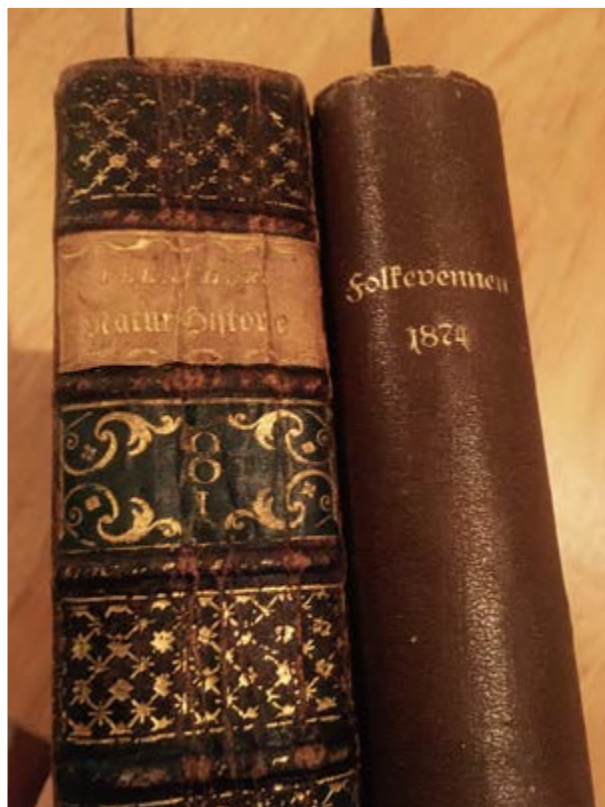
Collet goes on to describe falcon-harvesting in places in Norway such as Dovre and Varanger, and provides a great overview of historical falconry culture across the continent. It is not just the falcons that get attention; the Goshawk is described as the 'kitchen bird' and was nicknamed 'the Kitchen Master'. The Sparrowhawk is portrayed as the boldest of the birds and very efficient, while the eagle, mightiest of them all, is depicted as a very heavy bird to carry. There is even a sentence on women flying small falcons, and how falconry has its own language and lots of trade secrets regarding trapping and training. It is quite incredible that all this information has yet to resurface in Norway. By contrast, Olav Bø later writes about falcon-trapping in Norway in 1962, and gives a comprehensive history of this practice while emphasising that there was most likely little or no falconry activity in Scandinavia. The gap in Bø's insight and understanding regarding falconry is probably due to him associating it with the upper classes.

### The Royal Norwegian Science Society

Here, we return to Carl Deichman and his 'fine thesis' mentioned in the section on Denmark. Deichman's *Om Falke og Falkejagt* has proved to be not only the most insightful and important of all of these Nordic texts, but the oldest as well. Deichman is a delight to read in passages such as: *'What has led me to this material is a modest traveller's visit to Denmark earlier in this century. He had visited the King's falconer, an Englishman, who was the first to introduce this style of hunting in Denmark'. In one way, this was right, because it has been lost for such a long time that it might as well have been new.'*

This 'Englishman' (as stated by other writers such as Ole Worm) was actually an Irishman by the name of Robert Molesworth. His family came into the service of the Danish Embassy. While any further information about Molesworth and falconry is not stated here, we know that he was active in politics and published *An Account of Denmark*, which contained an entire appendix on his political activities.

\* It must be mentioned that there is documentation about falconry being operated in Denmark from 1664 (CJ Tillish). Up until then, falconers had only ever been mentioned in Danish literature as 'foreigners', and not by name.





The royal falconry mews in Copenhagen is long gone but the street name is still there to see in broad daylight. It probably makes little sense to busy Copenhageners.

Deichman also provides a curious introduction to the origins of Nordic falconry: *'That the first inhabitants have sustained themselves by hunting and fishing is nothing new [followed by various information of hunting and fishing ways]. How peculiar should it be if they did not know how to make use of birds of prey, which surrounded them, and since the old days were trained and used for hunting in other places. (...) Great men have not taken time to describe hawking or the ways of training, feeding or using birds of prey, which in itself is a natural gift and has roots from our ancestors' customs, traditions and indulgences. Falcons and hawks have from old times been considered some of the dearest possessions of the Northern inhabitants, and most would not be parted with the person after they had died and were buried. Hawks and falcons are also carved on runic stones.'*

Deichman goes on to describe *Rolf Krake's Saga* (*Hrólfs saga kraka*), and how he and his men visited King Adel in Uppsala in Sweden with hawks on their shoulders. Rolf himself had a hawk named 'Habrok' (long legs). He then continues: *'Should we not consider them all falconers, as kings and chiefs use hawks? Hunting has always been the Nordic Kings' most desired activities, and they even got the nickname "Veidekonge" (hunting king).'* In Old Norse, Kings are described going 'hunting with hawks and hounds' (*'Ok fkeemti fer vid Haukum ok hundum'*).

From both a falconry perspective and a museum perspective, I would like to add that if one does not

know what to look for, it will not be visible. But for those who know what to look for, even the smallest bit of evidence in archaeology and literature shows that falconry indeed occurred. And as these clues are so scarce, either because of withering away in the acid soils or being forgotten by oral histories, it makes them even more valuable.

The question then is why or how did it end? Deichman concluded that since falconry was the preserve of nobility, it was simply impossible for regular people to own hawks or falcons – they were property of the King. As late as the last 100-200 years, people still needed the signature of the King to trap and export falcons. Without this permission, no one was allowed to obtain a bird of prey from the North because it was an important part of the nation's industry.

Incredibly enough, this text on falconry is part of the Royal Norwegian Science Society, which also means that it has been under Royal protection by the King since 1767. Carl Deichman was Danish, and died in 1780 in Norway. He had a collection of more than 7,000 books that were used to establish the first and largest public library in Norway, *Deichman Library*. DKNVS published his article on falconry eight years after his death, and it is truly part of Norwegian and Danish cultural history.

Though these scholars were not directly involved in falconry, they still managed to portray the dignity of something which they saw as having a historical value. That they were inspired to write about falconry so honourably in the first place is extraordinary, and their efforts to preserve its place in Scandinavian history shall not go unnoticed. Their texts are important cornerstones of Scandinavian falconry records, and retrieving these books from antiquaries or digital archives is a step in the right direction for the future awareness of falconry history for the Nordic countries.

*If you have any information on falconry in the Nordic countries from other foreign literature (French, Spanish, etc), please contact:*

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# House of Grouse

by Steve Chindgren

After reading about gyrfalcons in *About the Art of Hunting with Birds* by King Frederick and in the writings of Ronald Stevens, I had to have one. It was the early 1970s and the captive breeding of falcons was just beginning. Before the mid-70s, birds for falconry were solely acquired from the wild, as hybrids or captive-bred falcons were not available to falconers.

My first experience hawking sage grouse was with a 52-ounce eyass Alaskan grey gyrfalcon named BBG. That was in 1974 and it was her second season. BBG was a successful game hawk, taking many pheasants and ducks, and I was sure she could take sage grouse. I was wrong, but I was determined we would succeed! Each week on my day off, I would drive 300 miles to hawk sage grouse. The terrain was perfect, not to mention there was public access, so I didn't need to ask permission to hunt on the land. The grouse flushed clean and flew strong, and I was hooked! I decided that my goal would be to hawk sage grouse on a regular basis, and I started to design my life so that I could achieve that goal. Now I have the perfect situation with a rustic hunting lodge located in the heart of sage grouse country. I call it, The House of Grouse!

The following story may be a bit off the subject, but it is an enjoyable story to share!

BBG was a great falcon and had helped to build my reputation as a successful falconer. One afternoon, in the fall of 1974, I got a call from a friend who was working with the Sundance Film Festival. He asked if I would mind taking someone from the film industry out hawking. I said sure, and was introduced to Katharine

Ross, an American film and stage actress. She starred in three of the most popular films of the 1960s and 1970s: *The Graduate*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Stepford Wives*. Wow! I was a young single guy and this iconic actress was going hawking with me! It turned out to be a terrible day with rain and wind, but I flew BBG on a duck. Unfortunately, it flushed when she was wide and off flying out of sight in the storm. Both Katharine and I were drenched from the rain, but she said, "I feel so bad you have lost your bird. Can I do anything to help?" So I gave her a lure and told her go stand on the top of a small hill, after showing her how to swing the lure. Her bodyguard was sitting in their car, while I took off in my vehicle. After about 15 minutes, I found BBG and hurried back to find Miss Ross still on the hill swinging the lure in the rain. She was delighted that I had found my bird and rode back with me while her escort followed. We stopped at a donut house to get a box of donuts then went back to my place to enjoy them with some hot coffee. She was very nice and it was a fun experience!

Steve  
Chindgren







I digressed while sharing a fond memory, so back to hawking sage grouse, which was a new challenge for me back in the 70s. I decided that I would do everything I could in order to succeed at flying these amazing and powerful game birds. Sage grouse are North America's largest grouse, and they are found in several western states in the USA in huge areas of BLM (public land) where sagebrush provides both food and shelter. Males are twice as large as females and can weigh up to seven pounds, which can discourage medium-size falcons. Sage grouse hold well to pointing dogs and are found in open flat ground that is perfect for falconry. They are strong quarry and provide a clean flight and reach peak fitness in mid-December. Sage grouse are not as agile as smaller grouse and this is particularly true when trying to escape into the limited cover of the desert. Sage along draws is taller but has no undergrowth and the grouse cannot hide very easily. Falcons learn to stay with the grouse until they take refuge in cover, making for long chases. As the hawking season goes on, the grouse get stronger and stronger, making for chases that often go several miles. It is during these long chases that the risk increases for a golden eagle to kill the falcon when they are on the grouse. The goal in sage grouse hawking is to take the grouse cleanly without a tail chase. No matter how good your bird is, you will occasionally get tail chases and golden eagles are always present. We call them the "Black Dragons."

### **The House of Grouse**

As I continued to pursue grouse with my falcons, my friend, Howard Brinkerhoff, asked me to bring my falcon to his lodge for some duck hawking in the fall of 2000. Falcons Ledge was a top-of-the-line Orvis-endorsed fly-fishing and wing-shooting lodge. My wife, Julie and I boarded a Learjet at the executive terminal in Salt Lake City with one other passenger, Bruce Rauner from Chicago. I asked the pilot who was the last famous passenger on the jet. He replied, "We flew Robert Redford's dog to Los Angeles yesterday!" This was my first and only flight on a Learjet. As we landed on a small runway in Roosevelt, Utah, I saw two black Suburbans approaching the plane. We deplaned and were greeted by David Kennedy, a falconer from Atlanta, Georgia. We loaded up our gear and drove to the lodge, for a weekend of hawking and fine dining. It was a fun weekend with good times as the stories and wine flowed at the dinner table. David Kennedy had a beautiful peregrine falcon but he wanted to try a gyr x peregrine tiercel on sage grouse with me in Wyoming, so the following spring I made two nice black gyr x peregrine tiercels. David joined me at my camp in Wyoming in early October. One of the tiercels was for David and I kept the other. I was also flying another gyr x peregrine tiercel, Jomo, in his 14th season. One night around the campfire we discussed going in on property in the area, and after camping for 14 years, a warm cabin sounded pretty good.



Not too long after that conversation, I found, at the end of a dirt road, two miles west of Eden on the edge of the desert, the coolest place I could imagine, and it was for sale. I sent a video and letter to David asking if he wanted to partner with me. He did, and I'll never forget the day when I pulled the Scamp trailer over to the new house. It was December 21st 2002. I took the cushions out of the trailer and made a bed in the cabin. I was so excited, knowing this was going to be the next and final chapter of my grouse hawking. The House of Grouse was a big change after camping for 14 years in a 13-foot trailer.

The place needed a lot of work, but with David Kennedy's support and the building skills of my childhood friend Jim Hutchins, we soon had a warm and comfortable lodge! Many falconers from around the world have been to the House of Grouse to witness hawking the greater sage grouse and the guest book is full of the names of those who have enjoyed the experience.

The House of Grouse is located in southern Wyoming in the USA. As the host, I am always the first one up, around 5:00 in the morning. I turn on the light for the birds that have spent the night in the garage on wall perches to wake and cast. While the coffee is brewing, I cut up fresh fruit and make raisin toast. Then I put on my headlamp and go outside to let out the dogs, catch pigeons and load everything into the truck. Once the guests start stirring, I turn on some mellow music. Everyone enjoys the ambience of the warm fire and cozy atmosphere. I like to have at least an hour to enjoy the morning coffee and socialize. Falconers begin weighing their birds in the garage and loading them into the trucks.

We like to be in the field at first light, so we leave about an hour before sunrise. With the birds and dogs loaded,

we head out! We travel to different locations each day, but each has an amazing landscape with open rolling sage and a backdrop of the Wind River Mountains covering five million acres of public land.

Once we get to our destination of choice, the telemetry is placed on the falcons and we decide who will fly first. The dog is fitted with a radio collar so we can tell if it is on point, should the dog go out of sight. We nicknamed my English pointer "ten minute TJ" because he always has a point within ten minutes! His father was "ten minute Tucker." But the trick is to know where to run the dog! The air is full of the smell of sage from the desert.

Most days we are able to fly three falcons while the morning is still crisp! After hawking, we check out new areas and run the young dogs to give them grouse hunting experience. We then head back to the lodge to put the birds in the weathering area and have a bite to eat. The weather in the fall is perfect, below freezing in the morning and warming to 70°F in the midday. We play basketball, horseshoes, beanbag toss, and croquet. There are several great fishing rivers close by: the Green River and the Big Sandy River, both with trophy trout! When we return from fishing, the hot tub is a great place to warm up after hours in our waders in the river.

Everyone cleans up for dinner and we enjoy a cocktail hour with appetizers! The House of Grouse is the perfect place to socialize and share the stories of the day. Those not cooking enjoy watching sports on TV or reading one of the many falconry books from the library. Once the table is set, the TV is muted and we listen to our favorite music. The dinners are fantastic and it is great to visit with friends and raise a glass to falconry, quarry and wild places.

*Having the House of Grouse  
is a dream come true!*





## FALCONRY IN MALTA

*by Lawrence Formosa, President of the Fridericus Rex Malta Falconers*

Falconry laws are now finalised and have been put into practice in Malta. We have our first licensed falconers and the numbers are expected to increase as other members are being encouraged to take the exams in order to get their licence. From now on, every person who flies birds of prey should be a member of a falconry club, of which there are two at the moment, and they have to stay within the parameters of the laws. The positive part of these laws is that after explaining our particular falconry situation, the legislators noticed our feedback and gave us the opportunity to apply for special permits when needed which may allow us to fly in particular areas and times when other types of hunting is not allowed. This can be a great benefit for us and, as a club, we stressed that this flexibility is crucial. During the consultation period, the IAF played a very important role in forming our laws. The climax was when, during the biggest consultation meeting, we had the presence of Gary Timbrell, who provided very constructive input due to his vast experience as a falconer and also as an official in the IAF. We all hope that as falconry is now being more stabilized due to laws and awareness, there will be more interest in this way of life. From my point of view, the sacrifices and dedication needed to keep and fly a bird properly are the major obstacles that hold people back from actually practicing the sport. In the beginning, many look at falconry from a different point of view, so it is important that they are properly informed. As a club, we strongly believe that to practice and sustain falconry here, we should release quarry and maintain

it, otherwise it will be nearly impossible to have a sustainable population of quarry. This can only be achieved by a collective agreement from all interested parties making it a long-term solution. The hunting practice here depends mainly on migratory birds and they come in for very short periods of time, which makes it difficult to practice falconry.

The historical part of falconry is also getting more popular here in Malta. Recently on the 23rd February 2017, an Italian photographer, Serena Galvani, decided to launch and do an exhibition of her photography book named *Falc-On-Aria*. This book is full of nice photos of birds of prey which are full of significance and meaning for falconers in these regions. She decided to do an exhibition of her work here to revive the historical relation between Malta, Italy and Spain. On this occasion, several personalities and falconers from the three countries were present, and both Maltese falconers clubs were invited and represented. It was a nice opportunity for us to visit with and exchange ideas with falconers from other countries. Another very interesting chapter about falconry in Malta has been written by Natalino Fenech, a Maltese ornithologist and is published in the book *Falconry – Its Influence on Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage in Poland and Across Europe*. In my opinion, this book has the most informative material ever published about falconry in Malta, from the past to present. These links are part of the beauty of falconry, where it allows the diversity of different countries to unite in one perspective.





# AURORA STURNUS VULGARIS

by Ed Coulson



Joe Wilcken's  
merlin 'Cindy'  
photo by  
Jon Franklin

Utah, USA, February 2017 – Standing by a row of huge 4x4 vehicles lined up as if for a drive-in movie, we stomp our feet in the February cold. A flock of a few thousand starlings funnels down out of a blizzard and alights on the dark roofs of the massive dairy below us, creating the perfect visual negative of falling snow as they descend.

Nine of us from Ireland and the UK have come to join dozens of American and Canadian falconers to watch merlins flown at these European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), during the Utah Merlin Meet, but today the weather is not cooperating. So instead we warm ourselves with conversation and shared food, and we talk about trapping.

\*

For falconers in some countries, trapping birds of prey for use in falconry is a familiar and much-loved element of their sport. Living in Ireland, it was not something I had witnessed before.

Thanks to the meet organiser, Jeremy Bradshaw, some of us were lucky enough to see it in action in his home state of Washington before heading to snowy Utah. And for me it was not hard to understand how the addictive challenge and reward of trapping raptors can equal the pleasure of hunting with a trained bird.

On our first day out with Jeremy in Washington, it was impossible not to be shocked at the abundance of birds of prey: countless red-tailed hawks perched at regular intervals along every highway; an American kestrel adorning the powerline outside every farmhouse; merlin after merlin on lookout from the tops of urban cottonwood trees; hen harriers on patrol wherever we stopped; prairie falcons; sharp-shinned hawks; Cooper's hawks; and bald eagles by the dozen.

This richness surely has a lot to do with the mixed use of land here. As we drove through relatively flat and open farming country, we experienced an intoxicating procession of smells while passing dairies, apple

orchards littered with last year's discarded fruit, hop farms, vineyards, and (recently legalised) marijuana plantations. With such precious crops, the bird abatement industry is thriving here. Jeremy's approach to trapping begins from the idea that his local merlins usually eat two sparrows for breakfast. In his book *The Passage Merlin* he writes, "Once they have caught and consumed their first sparrow, merlins sit on a high, visible perch to digest, relax, and look for the second half of their breakfast... a second half that I am more than happy to offer behind my hoop trap!"

That day we had only the larger starlings, not sparrows, for bait. Probably for that reason, we couldn't get a merlin to come in to the set. But a couple of days later our luck was in. Not with a merlin, but a haggard female Cooper's hawk.

We used a bal-chatri, set with two starlings, by the side of a muddy track leading to a farmstead. After inspecting her plumage, praising her looks, and impolitely making her pose for photos, she was let go. She promptly flew back to the same perch, relaxed and safe. Such behaviour confirmed to us that while being trapped and held is not exactly pleasant for the hawk, the stress passes as soon as they are released.

\*

Following a classic American road-trip through desert and prairie, we have arrived in Utah for the first day of the flying. And that morning, veteran merlin hawker and originator of the meet, Al Ross, has gained permission at a farm he has long had his eye on. People are saying it supports a starling population larger than any other in the area – in the tens of thousands – and that the manager greeted Al's enquiry with open arms, exclaiming, "We've been waiting for you!"

The farm is a dairy, housing thousands of head of cattle outside in row upon row of

Joe Wilcken's  
Merlin 'Cindy'  
pushing up  
the starling  
flock  
photo by Jon  
Franklin

covered stalls, and in open feedlots, and in a vast grid of individual calf sheds. In other words, it is gigantic, and there is plenty of food for starlings.

But these dairies are not without risk. Merlins will often bring a kill down right into a confined herd of cows, and the feedlots are swimming in fresh, sticky manure that clings to feathers. And of course the huge abundance of prey obviously attracts wild raptors.

As we pull the vehicles up onto a rise to get a view of the top of the stalls, we are speechless at the black mass of starlings filling the corrugated roofs, dripping from the gutters and railings, sagging the powerlines, and carpeting the gangways where the feed is distributed. Jeremy, Al, and co-organiser Joe Wilcken cannot disguise their excitement, their wheels spinning in the dust as they race off to plan where to slip.

Kelly Martinez, from Idaho, is the first to fly. As is usual, her merlin is put on the roof of an SUV as an initial hunting perch. Normally this is at some distance downwind from the flock to enable a climb.

The idea is that as the merlin approaches and is spotted, a critical mass of panicked starlings will rise into the air rather than clamp, ideally taking the entire flock with them. Once they are up, the merlin can push the murmuration, pressure it, separate parts of it, and eventually either take an individual from within the flock or take advantage with a stoop as one of them makes a dash for cover. A climbing approach, and a determined and beautiful working of the flock, are what these merlin hawkers are looking for.

In this opening flight, only a small group of starlings lifts for Kelly's merlin, though she does take them around for a short while above the stalls before settling

Jeremy  
Bradshaw  
with female  
merlin 'May'  
photo by Jon  
Franklin



on the milking barn roof. But what she seems to have achieved is to give the whole flock a nervousness: they just won't settle properly, like a bedsheet that won't billow out right and has to be thrown and re-thrown. The expectant crowd hopes this means they'll lift better for the next flight.

And they really do. Next is Joe's bird, Cindy. She has already powered low over the stalls towards the chattering starlings and is lifting the whole lot of them up in a sudden, focussed, silence. This is what we've been waiting for.

The starlings are like treacle spilling from a lifting spoon; like an oil droplet in slow-motion in zero gravity; a snapshot of the ocean swell; a flag whip-cracking in a storm; the breathing flank of some mythical beast; the carefully flung hand of a ballet dancer; a perfectly curling scoop of ice cream... And then the merlin is returning to earth.

Next up is Jeremy's intermewed bird, MoonPie. The starlings rise again in their thousands for her, so she



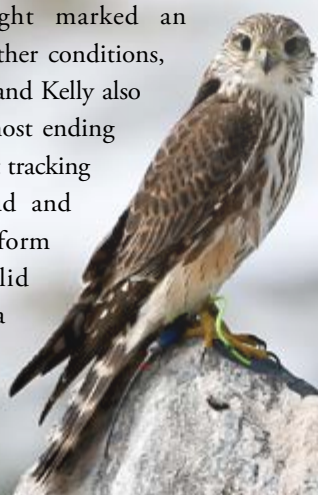
picks up where Cindy left off. She hides herself in the flock, flies hard with it, emerges and stoops to split it like dough, squash it, stretch it, carve it, for what seems like a very long time. Again, this is what we have come to see: the full Aurora Sturnus Vulgaris. Fellow merlin hawker Patrick Shane praises it as the biggest, longest flight he's ever seen.

Over the following snowy days, we watch the falconry birds do battle many times with a resident wild merlin. The one flown by Tyler Sladen draws particular attention from the local, the two dark shapes fading fast into the snowy distance, locking and flipping together like winter ninjas.

By Friday afternoon it is clear again and icy cold. Down by the calf sheds, it is the turn of Jeremy's other merlin, first-year bird Miss May. Just as he is preparing to slip her, a wild female prairie falcon blazes through, igniting the starlings in advance for the merlin, so that as Miss May flies in they are already twisting around uneasily over the pens. She balls them up and pushes them aside repeatedly, like a magnet expelling iron filings. They pirouette round and round, and mushroom up like a smoke ring.

\*

That extended flight marked an improvement in weather conditions, with Al, Joe, Patrick and Kelly also getting good slips, most ending with a kill and a short tracking session through mud and manure. Also on form and providing solid entertainment were a Richardson's merlin flown by John Shipley, a high-climbing jack merlin of Rob Conahan's, Tyler Sladen's imprint male kestrel, and a merlin flown by schoolteacher Trina Thomson.



Female Richardson's merlin flown by John Shipley, ready to go  
photo by Jon Franklin



Patrick Shane with merlin 'Alice'  
photo by Patrick Rummens

Trina's merlin spends weekdays in her grade school classroom, unsurprisingly adored by the kids. She usually flies it at doves. While the meet was Trina's first time flying starlings, it was definitely not her merlin's first time. When she put it on the roof of the car with a view of the flock, it was obvious that the starling scenario was familiar. That's because this bird was three times 'outermewed' by Al Ross.

Al has become well known for the practice of re-trapping his merlins year after year. He releases them in the spring in the same place he trapped them. In autumn, he returns and traps the same one again – they wear an ID band. He says they get wise to the traps, so he has to try different methods, but in one case a bird came down to a tethered starling and he simply made in as if they'd just made a kill together. He outermewed one merlin six times; another, five times.

Washington and Utah gave us a small but utterly inspiring taste of the joys, challenges and benefits that capturing and flying passage birds can provide. And it made me wonder: is it really impossible to imagine it in Ireland one day?



# TRADITIONAL CHINESE FALCONRY FURNITURE FROM THE BEIJING AREA

Being the capital of China for the longest time, the falconry culture in Beijing (北京; the northern capital) and the surrounding Northern Chinese plain area is the most sophisticated compared to other regions of China. Because of this sophisticated culture, the falconry equipment employed in this area is, also, the most elegant in China and was produced with the highest standards.

The falconry culture in the Beijing area was inherited from the royal courts, where it focused more on entertainment rather than harvesting game like the falconry practiced in other regions of China. Falconry had become more of a symbol of one's social status, and the falconry equipment was given a rich cultural connotation. Not only the production processes but also the materials are in the pursuit of luxury and rarity, which makes it a crown jewel of Chinese falconry culture.

Mr. Zhou's reproduction of Beijing style traditional falconry furniture is not just employing traditional skills and materials; it is also a balance between the functionality and the beauty of Chinese falconry culture.



Zhou, Xiaochu (周晓初) is a traditional Beijing falconry equipment craftsman; his ancestors on his father's mother's side served in the Qing (清) royal court between 1863 and 1898, and they had access to the craftsmen of the royal court furniture production department (清宫造办处). His family has been using the technique and knowledge learned from these royal craftsmen to produce falconry furniture/equipment and Manchurian Archery equipment for more than four generations (probably six generations). Mr. Zhou is a member of the Capital Falconry Heritage Conservation Academy devoting himself to mastering the production of falconry equipment to the traditional royal standard. Because of his dedication to the art of producing falconry furniture, Mr. Zhou has been officially recognized for Intangible Cultural Heritage by Chaoyang district of the Beijing municipal government. This article is the summary of an oral interview with Mr. Zhou. In this article, we will introduce the main falconry furniture employed in the Beijing area, which includes swivels (鹰转环), water gourds (水葫芦), meat ladles (肉瓢), hoods (帽子), bells (铃铛), bell plates (铃铛板), gourd hangers (葫芦腰挂), braided bell bewits (铃铛辫), wo zi (窝子, a hunting creance holder), bang zi (棒子, a hunting creance roller, which together with wo zi work like a fishing reel), jesses (脚襻), ha ma (蛤蟆 "toad"; the section connecting jesses and swivel), leash (五尺 "five foot"), tao xiu (套袖 Chinese falconry cuff, mangalah), and hunting bags (大小猎兜). Most of the furniture presented in this article was either made by Mr. Zhou or is from his collection.

Mr. Zhou discussed the function of traditional Beijing Style falconry furniture, and how it was produced, with his father.





### Swivel (鹰转环)

The swivel is the most beautiful yet complex piece of equipment to make of all of the traditional Chinese falconry equipment. It used to be custom-made by very skilled goldsmiths and the price varied depending on the process involved, for example 12 handmade swivels were sold for RMB 100,000 (approximately €14,000) at an auction in 2013.

The traditional swivels were made of iron, brass, copper or silver-nickel alloy; they were designed for good fortune and in different shapes, such as pumpkins, millstone, celestial bodies, Chinese cinnabar lacquer boxes, etc. There were always two pairs of dragon heads crafted on the top and bottom of the swivel. The dragon head is said to be the second son of Yaci (睚眦), a mythical dragon in Chinese mythology who is said to be a good hunter and fierce fighter, and who is also often used in traditional Chinese cold weapons. Traditionally, swivels used in the Beijing area are only decorated with this dragon head design.

A finely handmade swivel should be closely joined together but still be easily rotated. It has to be carved out of a whole piece of metal; iron especially takes the most work and that is why the handmade iron swivels have the highest value. A cast swivel can look similar to a handmade one but it requires much less skill to make and, for that reason, cast iron swivels are usually factory made and worth considerably less.



Mr. Zhou's rare collection of steel swivels



Mr. Zhou produced this beautiful brass swivel



This very rare bronze swivel is from the collection of the late Mr. Wang, Shixiang (王世襄)

### **Bell plate (铃铛板)**

A traditional bell plate has the shape of a gourd for good fortune and is made of bone, antler, ox horn, or ivory. There are usually holes on a bell plate to accommodate the bell. Both the hole diameter and the distance between the main hole and the other holes affect the loudness of the bell, and for that reason the holes have to be adjusted to different sized bells while making a bell plate.



### **Jesses (脚襻), ha ma (蛤蟆) and leash (五尺)**

Using a regular rope as a leash is not acceptable in traditional Chinese falconry culture. For example, to achieve the best connection with other equipment, the leash required different braiding styles at different sections to give the best fit and performance. It takes a lot of work and time to braid the leash. The length is around



3.5 meters and it is folded in half while being used. The jesses are also braided, and are very similar to the Arabian subuq in style and arrangement. The ha ma is the section connecting jesses and swivel. Overall, the arrangement of Chinese leash/jesses system is very similar to the Arabian the subuq, midwar and mursil system.

### **Water gourd (水葫芦), meat ladle (肉瓢)**

The water gourd is a portable container for hawks to drink water while out hunting, but was not only used for this purpose; it could also be used to feed meat to the hawks. Most of the natural gourds were not of an ideal shape, so people employed new methods of making a water gourd using leather, paper, wood, or fabric to form the shape, and then they covered the “gourd” with natural lacquer. Lacquered gourds soon became popular because they were beautiful and easy to make. Perfectly shaped natural gourds were so rare that they were only used for display. A 200-year-old natural water gourd was sold for RMB 40,000 (over €5,000) at an auction not long ago.

The meat ladle is a container for feeding hawks. Commoners used nut shells or the skulls of primates to make meat ladles, but the royals and nobles only used the lacquered ones.



Natural water gourd

Lacquered meat ladle







Lacquered gourds

### Wo zi (窝子) / bang zi (棒子) set

The set is used for hunting with smaller birds of prey such as Eurasian sparrowhawks, Japanese sparrowhawks, and occasionally merlins, and worked like a fishing reel. It is made of seven intertwined rattan circles, the top/front opening stays firm and stable and the bottom opening stays elastic.

The bang zi (creance roller) has the shape of a tapered cylinder; it is made of gourd or wood and is used with the wo zi (creance holder). Falconers use a special technique to wind string onto the bang zi, then place

the wo zi over the top of the wound string. When the bang zi is pulled out, the wound string stays inside of the wo zi. One end of the string is attached to the bird's jesses; as the falconer casts off the bird to chase the game, the string easily comes out of the wo zi without dragging or affecting the bird's speed.

### Hunting bag (猎兜)

The hunting bag is a bag made of leather or fabric which attaches to the falconer's waist. There are two types of traditional hunting bag: one is for carrying birds, and the other one is for carrying hares. The mesh knitting patterns give the hunting bag better ventilation. A special opening is designed to prevent the game from getting away and is still convenient for the falconer to take the prey out.



Hunting bag for sparrows



Hunting bag for hares and others



Hunting bag  
for hares and  
others

### Jia guai (架拐), chuo tou (戳头)

Hunting small passerines with a shrike is a unique and interesting part of Chinese falconry. The jia guai is made from the jujube tree and is used as a perch for shrikes. When the growing season of the jujube arrives, the craftsman carves the tree bark; after the cut is made, the tree gradually heals and forms into a burl after 1-3 years. The ones that turn out right are harvested in winter to be made into jia guai.

The chuo tou is made of brass or iron and is used as a spike to insert the jia guai into the ground. The shapes of the chuo tou are all different, such as an upside-down gourd, a hair clasp or a lotus seed pod, etc.

Jia guai



Modern toad-headed hood, by  
internationally renowned Chinese  
hood maker Zhao, Yi

### Hood (鹰帽)

Chinese falconers started using falconry hoods before the Sui Dynasty (隋581–618 AD). It is believed that falconry hoods were brought to China through the Silk Road. In Xi Jin Zhi (析津志) by Xiong Mengxiang (熊梦祥) of Yuan Dynasty (元1271–1368 AD), he vividly describes a gold-embroidered hood with a detail at the base of the horse hair tassel. This kind of hood can also be seen in many antique Chinese paintings.

From the styles of Chinese falconry hoods, one can clearly see the influence of the Arabian and Indian designs. However, Chinese hood makers incorporated these exotic hood designs with Chinese innovation to form two very unique Chinese hood patterns as late as the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 AD): the goldfish-eyed hoods (jin yu yan hoods 金鱼眼) and the toad-headed hoods (ha ma hoods 蛤蟆头).

It is said that when the young cobblers were apprenticing under a master cobbler, sewing falconry hoods and making drum covers were the basic skills that they needed to learn. In the old days, many falconers and cobblers from Beijing and Tianjin were making falconry hoods based on the Zha du zi (扎肚子), Pang xie gai (螃蟹盖), Ha ma tou (蛤蟆头) design, with their own personal improvements. The design of a goldfish-eyed hood, by contrast, was more ingenious and unique.

Making a goldfish-eyed hood did not require any hood block: the hood was sewn up with a spiral design so the eye part raised naturally. The hollow carved patterns in the back of the hood were for good fortune.







Two modern goldfish-eyed hoods (金鱼眼) by internationally renowned Chinese hood maker Zhao, Yi



### Tao xiu (套袖; Chinese falconry cuff, mangalah)

The Chinese tao xiu is made differently from the Arabian mangalah. It is usually sewn with multiple layers of cotton fabrics without filling, the most common sewing lines being apricot pit and 卐 styles, with an even space of two millimeters between stitches. The length of a tao xiu depends on the length of the falconer's forearm; the diameter depends on how much the falconer dresses. Because during the hawk's manning, multiple persons need to take turns, the inner diameter of a tao xiu generally is big enough to accommodate two hands.



Tao xiu and the proper way to hold the leash

Making and using traditional Chinese falconry furniture is an important part of Chinese falconry. The Capital Falconry Heritage Conservation Academy (CFA) is determined to preserve and improve the Chinese traditional furniture/equipment of Beijing. We are also studying falconry furniture from other parts of China; hopefully we will be able to systematically display all falconry furniture from China in the Chinese section of our Falconry Museum in the near future.

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Escanea este código para ver la traducción al español



<http://q-r.to/bam7UG>



Every year throughout the British Isles there are a small band of enthusiasts who dedicate a couple of months of their lives to training and flying merlins at skylarks, a most unique branch of falconry. The sport itself, although only practised over a short period of time, is a kind of miniature heron hawking, the difference being that the larks are located by pointing dogs as opposed to being intercepted on passage, but the aim is the same, the haute vol, the high flight, which falconers have strived to achieve for centuries.

#### **Lark hawking has a long and prestigious history**

*“Louis XIII kept hundreds of big hawks. He could have a good day’s hawking whenever he liked at cranes, kites, or herons. Yet he did not disdain, amidst all these temptations, to devote a whole morning to lark-hawking with merlins, and was overjoyed at killing one lark with a cast of them. It is true that this was a winter lark, but it was only a lark for a’ that!”*

Edward Clough Newcombe (1810-1871), one of the greatest falconers that ever lived, described lark hawking as second only to heron hawking as the finest flight in falconry.

Mary Queen of Scots and Catherine II (Catherine the Great, 1729-1796) were both keen merlin enthusiasts. The merlin was known as the ladies’ hawk and it was not uncommon during medieval times for a bride to carry a merlin on her wedding day.

Up until the Protection of Birds Act 1954, merlins were taken from their moorland nests, then, at the end of the lark hawking season, would be released back in to the wild, owing to the difficulty of keeping these hawks alive during the winter months and their propensity to ‘fly cunning’ in their second season, even if they survived the winter. Modern trends have changed of course. This practice not only suited the falconers but was beneficial

to the wild population of merlins. Taking these young hawks out of the firing line, so to speak, at a critical time in their lives, gave them a good start, increasing their numbers above the natural mortality rate.

Wild merlins are declining in Britain. Add to this mounting modern day legislation, and therefore this practice is no longer permissible, which is a shame for both merlins and falconers alike.

So the modern merlin man has to rely on the skill and dedication of the captive breeder. For our ‘group’, that is Nick Wilkinson, merlin breeder par excellence, without whom few, if any of us, would be flying merlins.

During modern times, a handful of falconers have hacked out merlins, such as Terry I’Anson, Paul Mackinder, Grant Hagger and Tony James – but alas no longer. As far as I am aware, nobody in the UK is currently hacking merlins.

Another drawback for the modern merlin man is the licensing system imposed by Natural England for larks. It is quite correct that this beautiful, melodious and fast declining song bird should only be flown at strictly under licence. However, it is the timing which is the problem. Merlins are generally ready to enter by August, an important month of the season. But licences run from 1st September, resulting in the young hawk spending far





Con Taylor

too much time being flown to the lure prior to being entered. Incidentally, the licence runs up until the end of February, which is quite ridiculous. Nobody continues to fly their merlins beyond October, most terminating their season by the end of September, unless they have an exceptional hawk, or nothing better to do!

Lark hawking almost feels like a clandestine pastime. If a merlin man happens to bump into a member of the public (God forbid), answering the usual questions, he has to be rather circumspect in his replies, blatantly lie in fact! A game or rook hawker may quite proudly tell a stranger of his hawk's vocation in life and prowess, but the merlin man, feeling almost ashamed to admit that he hawks larks, will pass his hawk off as a mere pet to avoid confrontation. One last note on the morals of lark hawking to any reader who may be taking a dim view. The number of larks killed throughout the season by all the merlin men put together is a drop in the ocean. Compare this to the thousands upon thousands of skylarks and other ground-nesting birds, nests, eggs, and young destroyed annually by early silage cutting.

For two months or more, the merlin man's every waking hour is consumed by the welfare of his tiny hawk; she is somewhat of a spoiled child, so no fasting or coarse diet for her. The falconer may put his large hawk out to weather and bathe whilst going about his business. Not so the merlin man. If he puts his hawk out on the lawn then he must remain there with her, not letting her out of his sight, even to make a cup of tea or answer the telephone, as one merlin man did recently only to find that a buzzard had killed his jack. There have been instances of tawny owls and sparrowhawks killing weathering merlins. On one occasion, a merlin was even attacked by a woodpigeon!

Anyway, back to the field. It is not by accident that the skylark is the chosen quarry. For, during the season, so evenly are the two birds matched. I reiterate a

ringing flight with a good merlin and a good lark is one of the finest spectacles in falconry. It is not just the flight itself but the whole gamut of lark hawking that appeals to the participants: a happy, late-summer pastime, taking place on beautiful remote moorland, with shorts and t-shirts being the order of the day on those balmy late afternoons and evenings (well, most of the time!).

Merlins are easy to man and train, although due to their diminutive size, diligence, care and attention to detail is paramount. It is not difficult to train a merlin to drive moulting larks into cover and kill them, hedge-row pot-hunting, but this is not lark hawking.

Most young merlins when taken to the field will instinctively chase the first larks they have ever seen, if not the first, generally within a day or two. Young or heavily moulting larks are usually what the hawk is entered on. All a work in progress, soon moving on to

Grant Haggart





'Maggie', flown by Richard Waddington

stern ground larks, long chases across the moor, lots of stoops and throw ups. Also mounting larks, which take her skywards where she has to beat them in the air before they bail for cover. Then, if the hawk is a good one, true ringers, lark hawking. When the young merlin first makes a ringing flight, she is generously rewarded for her efforts, whether she kills or not. In this way we hope to encourage the merlin in her vocation in life. If you find yourself in possession of a hard flying and determined merlin, the trouble you have gone to will be amply rewarded.

Of course, like all hawks, not all merlins make the grade. By way of bringing this article to a conclusion I will relay a couple of emails, recounting days on the moor, sent by Richard Waddington about 'Maggie', which amongst our group has been one of the very best merlins.

#### Day 1

Went over to Malham today. We had a few flights, nothing special, so pushed on hoping to end the day on a high. Up gets a lark, Maggie away. A bit of a ground-level ding dong before the lark decides safety lies upwards. It shot up on its tail then put a couple of rings in, the hawk doing likewise. A hot day with no breeze with Maggie pumping hard, putting in a couple of big rings. Another couple of rings, she was high but seemingly making no headway, this was a good lark. Beaten, Maggie set her wings. As she drifted back over, Todd on point, the lark broke. The merlin stooped, the lark evaded it, singing as it went, Maggie throwing up vertically to maintain her advantage. The lark shifted to top gear and reached for the heavens, up and up the two combatants went. As the hawk rang wide the lark suddenly straight-lined it, Maggie swinging round to take up the chase. She fetched the lark but its response was to ring again, up and up they both

continued. The hawk got above her quarry and made a couple of shallow cuts at it. The lark knew it was beat and dropped like a stone for cover, Maggie in its wake, junking this way and that, trying to get a foot to him. They disappeared over the horizon. What a flight. Maggie was soon winging her way back, the lark deserved its freedom.

#### Day 2

Ossy moor. Took a while to find a lark but it was worth the wait. Both lark and merlin up on their tails before starting to ring. Onwards and upwards they both went, to a colossal height. The lark long since out of sight, even to binoculars. Eventually a dramatic vertical stoop, as the lark, beaten in the air, headed for sanctuary. Once again Maggie failed to kill but this plucky lark provided an excellent flight and deserved to save his life.

#### Nasri, star performer of the 2014 season; my email to our merlin group after a small personal tragedy

I presume Nasri had taken her lark on the edge of the plantation and the opportunistic buzzard, sitting in the trees, had dropped onto the unsuspecting hawk. It's hard to express the feeling of having your hawk so tragically taken from you. I think having a merlin killed in the field hits harder than losing any other type of hawk. This is because it's such an intense, short season. For eight weeks or so your whole life is taken over, all day every day, by the welfare of your tiny hawk. The diligence required in feeding and weighing, weathering and offering a bath, which, unlike other hawks, requires the falconer in attendance. All life is geared up towards the afternoon or evening on the moor, then when the hawk is placed in the mews for the night the falconer can relax until dawn the following day. Every waking hour is consumed by the lark hawking season for the merlinman.



Nasri, the star merlin of the 2014 season, tragically killed by a buzzard.





# HUNTING WITH BIRDS OF PREY IN KAZAKHSTAN

*Esengali Sadirbayev (Painter)*

[www.EsengaliArt.kz](http://www.EsengaliArt.kz)

In Kazakh history, on the plains of the Great Steppe, the tradition of hunting with birds of prey has deep roots that go back to ancient times.

Images of a bird of prey grappling with various quarry, reproduced in numerous Kazakh art and craft objects, and also in cave paintings, serve as evidence of the antiquity of this tradition. The remains of birds of prey, possibly of Golden eagles – called *berkut* in Kazakh – buried along with their owners, have been unearthed from numerous burial mounds.

This burial practice is born from a belief that the soul of the deceased is carried to the heavens by a sacred bird, a *berkut*. Among the ornaments found in a burial mound at Tarbagatai, there is a golden plaque with an image of 36 birds of prey with their heads turned back. Their eye sockets and talons are decorated with turquoise. There are also images of birds of prey on the headdress of the iconic Kazakh statue of Altyn Adam, or Golden Man.

It is important to note that the nomadic tribes of Kazakhstan saw the art of hunting as an exercise in military skill and practised it in large driven hunts. Another reason for falconry's spread was as an important economic activity.

As the Kazakh literary great, Mukhtar Auezov once said, "In the practice of hunting there is much hope and joy, and many passionate moments full of meaning. During the hunt a person is full of emotion, which brings him closer to a state of poetic enlightenment. This is not the life of a fading, ageing mind, but of a passionate feeling spent day and night in games and amusement. After all, in just one minute, one can experience both triumph and despair. And because the hunter tells stories about it all, his tongue is sharpened while his dream becomes clearer. There are many winged words dedicated to the flight of the *berkut*, the fate of a hunted fox, and the eagle hunter's skill. A great deal of lively and beautiful stories of the hunting life are passed on to us from the near and distant past."

Falconry is not only an art form, capable of inspiring humans towards a poetic state of mind, and is not just an ancient nomadic tradition. It has become a sacred human heritage that we must preserve and hand down.

In modern Kazakhstan, in recent years, there has been a continued revival of the ancient tradition of falconry. Kazakh falconers separate birds of prey into three main groups – falcons, accipiters, and eagles – or into those that climb high and those that fly closer to the ground.

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Hunter with dogs

When we talk about eagles, we mean the *berkut*, the Steppe eagle, and the Eastern imperial eagle. The falcons include the Saker, Peregrine, Gyrfalcon, Merlin, Kestrel, Barbary, and Eurasian hobby. The accipiters include the Northern goshawk, Sparrowhawk, and Shikra.

The *berkut* is a man's companion. It is a symbol of courage, bravery and power. The tradition of hunting with birds of prey is an ancient and elaborate ritual, but an interesting and unique one at the same time. A newly trapped Golden eagle is assessed according to its appearance, and evaluated in terms of its qualities as a falconry bird. The trapper will assess the bird's

head, eyes, wings, countenance, temperament, and the structure of its body and joints. Kazakhs say that "a bird flies with its wings but lands with its tail." Special attention is therefore paid to the wing structure, and the twelve tail and five flight feathers. The eagle's whole hunting essence is in its eyes and glance. It must be vigilant and radiant. Eagle hunters, called *berkutchi* in Kazakh, say that the heart of the bird can be seen through its eyes. The *berkut* is one of the few creatures that can look directly at the sun.

Kazakhs place falcons below eagles and accipiters in terms of their value in falconry. But they also say,



Fox hunting



“When the falcon is flying, other birds hide.” The falcon is very tenacious; it climbs and stoops rapidly at prey. It is the fastest among birds of prey, and is valued for its modesty, cleanliness, and nobility. Its plumage is always neat, as it constantly preens to remove the smallest bits of dust from its feathers. In ancient times, no hunting party of the khans or nobles was without its falcons, and they were considered the best of gifts.

These days in falconry, trophy hunting is far from the main aim. Rather, the aim is sport. A trained bird that steadily soars in the celestial heights and then suddenly swoops like an arrow onto its prey is a sight that gives unmatched pleasure. The hunter becomes literally ecstatic at the sight of a trained bird soaring in the sky. As he races across the steppe on a fast horse, deeply inhaling fresh air, taking in the rapidly evolving spectacle, his tiredness is replaced by a surprising sense of relaxation. It is an art and sport at the same time, which heals sickness and fills the body with positive energy.

For Kazakhs the hunting season traditionally begins in November, when the wind blows from the cold north, birds migrate to warmer climates, and animals become active. This time is considered the most suitable for hunting with birds of prey.

Kazakhs use several words to describe aspects of the hunting season. For example, *sonar* refers to the first covering of snow, untouched by any animal or bird. *Sonar* is the best time for hunting. *Kansonar* is fresh snow cover with animal tracks, which hunters can follow. *Salburyn* describes a multi-day group hunt away from the *aul*, the traditional Kazakh village. Groups of *berkutchi* are joined by hunters with dogs, singers, traditional improvising poets called *akyny*, and other hunting and thrill-seeking enthusiasts.

What follows is the gripping story of a day's hunting with a *berkut*.

One November day, an experienced *berkutchi* called Abylhakh Aga, having prepared his bird by keeping it on a 'starvation' ration for a day, and having fed his horse its fill, gathers the necessary equipment, and leaves to hunt. His spirits are high and he solemnly says to himself, “May all beasts have their heads turned to us,” as he leads his horse towards a nearby hill. After studying fresh animal tracks in the virgin snow, he rides to the top of the hill and looks around all alert. In the distance, dense bushes appear dark. Not a living thing could slip away unnoticed from this experienced *berkutchi*!

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Battue hunting





Eagle wolf attack

After some time the hunter and his bird suddenly become alive, the feathers on the bird's crest rise, her wings tremble slightly, and her talons fill with energy and passion as the hooded head begins nervously to turn in different directions.

The hunter rises in his stirrups nervously clutching the reins, his back straightened and eyes shimmering with joy. His face is now transformed! A whole spectrum of emotions is expressed on this face – hope, joy, and confidence in his friend, the *berkut*!

The hunter has spotted prey! It is a bright orange spot on the white snow – a fox out hunting field mice, not

realising that it will fall prey itself. The hunter removes the eagle's hood, whispers a few words in her ear, and points with his left hand in the fox's direction. Then he abruptly casts her off, releasing her to attack. She flies, while the hunter shouts encouraging words after her.

The *berkut* now climbs higher and aims toward the fox. But the fox, engaged in its own hunting, still hasn't noticed the danger. Then it suddenly stiffens, leaps to the side and begins to run, throwing up fluffy sparkles of snow. The image appearing before the spectator is of snow-white steppe, snowy mountain peaks rising far beyond the horizon, and the fiery-red



First hunt



dot of fleeing quarry. And above it – against the blue sky – the silhouette of a large dark-brown bird. The *berkut* is closing on the fox. Suddenly, the bird tucks her wings and swoops down on her prey. Ahead appears a shapeless struggling tangle in the powdery snow. This first attack is very important. If the fox dodges the eagle's talons, the bird will find it difficult to repeat the attack as she will lose momentum. And this is when a fox can escape. But this *berkut* is experienced and holds the fox. The falconer rushes to his friend's rescue so that the fox's sharp teeth do not damage her talons.

A living embodiment of bloodthirsty rapacity, the eagle is perched on her prey with her beak half opened, her sickle-shaped talons locked into the body of the slain beast. The fox is completely helpless in the steel-like feet of her predator. Jumping from the horse, the hunter delivers a powerful blow to the fox's nose using a heavy whip handle, while keeping an eye on the bird still panting from the struggle.

Abylhakh Aga takes a few titbits of meat from a special bag and begins to wave them, beckoning his eagle-friend.

The *berkut's* ruffled feathers suddenly go sleek, her talons relax, and with one flap of her enormous wings she easily and silently lands on the outstretched glove.

Her master says something gently to her while stroking her feathers and feeding her the meat, which she greedily swallows. Having fed the bird, the falconer hoods her and puts her on a special perch while he straps the fox to the saddle. Then he picks up his *berkut* with a glove, jumps on his horse, and rides on to continue hunting.

According to an experienced hunter, in a good year a *berkut* might take 30 to 60 foxes in a season! It is worth mentioning that our ancestors had a cult of the eagle and it was regarded as an object of worship and veneration. Carefully passed down from generation to generation, this attitude has survived to this day.

In modern Kazakhstan there are *berkutchi* and falconers' clubs which organise competitions and falconry festivals, as well as centres that are engaged in the breeding of birds of prey and the popularisation of this ancient hunting tradition.

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With the  
return of  
a successful  
hunt





# Four Impressions of Snipe Hawking in Ireland

Introduction *by Dick ten Bosch*

For most of the foreign visitors attending the IAF annual meet in Ireland this past autumn, the flights at snipe on the Irish bogs must have been a fantastic new experience. They could observe a type of waiting-on falconry specialized for an extremely fast flying small prey, the snipe, which requires perfect control by the falconer over his dog and falcon. How fortunate we were that this art of the greatest complexity and difficulty was executed with perfection by falconers right in front of our eyes, while consistently taking prey: Common snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and Jack snipe (*Lymnocryptes minimus*).

Below you will find four short personal impressions of the high flight on snipe. Two from participating falconers, Eric Witkowski and Xavier Morel, who both took quarry during the event; and two from spectators Anya Aseeva and myself, for whom this was the very first acquaintance with snipe hawking.

The editors of the Journal were able to choose from an enormous number of pictures made available to us by many. We hope that in all cases our warmest appreciation has reached those who contributed.

Snipe hawking in Ireland (2016) *by Eric Witkowski*

I was born in Poland. I first encountered falconry in forestry college, where as a student I was very actively involved in a rehab center for injured birds of prey. We were training and flying birds that couldn't be returned to the wild, and I had trained many goshawks and buzzards at that time. I hunted pheasants and rooks with goshawks for 15 years before I switched to peregrine and snipe hawking. In 2004, I obtained my forestry degree and decided to move abroad to Ireland. For the first three years I lived in the Midlands, where I met Martin Brereton, who lived nearby and who was the first one to show me proper falconry and snipe hawking. During the hunting season, I tried to visit him every

weekend to watch snipe hawking. I was impressed with the skills of this experienced falconer and his magnificent tiercel. When my wife got a job with a state forestry company we decided to move to the south-west of Ireland. There, a few years later, I decided to try this branch of falconry and I bought my first tiercel in 2010. In quite a short space of time, I could hunt snipe with a falcon with some success, which encouraged me to give it full commitment and focus. Currently, I live in County Kerry where we have plenty of moors and bogs to fly snipe and where I run my own falconry business. My first peregrine tiercel was captive bred from an Irish population. I found him very stubborn and we had slow progress during the initial stages of training. When we began to fly at snipe in October of his first year, he had shown great interest in them, and he brought the first snipe into bag after about four weeks of everyday trying. Very soon he began to kill them regularly. At the end

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<http://q-r.to/bam7tk>

Eric Witkowski





of November he killed six snipe in just seven days, just before the International Snipe Hawking Field Meet of 2010. He performed well during the meet but without a kill. Soon after this meet the weather became very cold by Irish standards and the snipe were gone until late January. He killed a few more before the season ended. The next two years were quite disappointing as he had some kind of unidentified bodily infection and could not perform well. When he was three years old the infection was finally gone and he began to perform as he should. For two seasons he was scoring more than 40 snipe in each season; he had become an exceptional snipe hawk. An extraordinary thing about this bird was his habit of stashing away most of the snipes killed before coming back for another flight. On many days he would kill one snipe, hide it, climb back for another one, make another kill and consume the second kill. Once or twice he killed three snipe in one day, of which the first two were stashed away. He really was a one-of-a-kind tiercel. Sadly, he was killed on the road while carrying a snipe across.

My second tiercel was obtained in 2012. He was also of Irish origin. Initial training went much smoother than with the first one. Soon he was flying free and showing great flying potential. As soon as the snipe had arrived, we started to fly them. Soon he caught his first jack snipe and he had become very determined to chase them hard. In his first season, he killed more than 30 snipe. He was a great flyer, always climbing fast and ripping the sky. He moulted out beautifully. The second season was great and it was really a joy to watch him fly. I lost him in his fourth season, just three days after my first tiercel's death, at the end of November 2015. The reason was a heart attack. Losing two exceptional tiercels in such a short time was a big hit for me.

My third snipe tiercel came from the UK, bred by Matt Gage from his selected game hawks' line. He was smaller than my first two tiercels (670 g chamber weight) with his chamber weight being 575 g. I ordered the smallest one available. Training went well and soon we began to fly free with a special emphasis on fitness training. While he was gaining his flight skills, we were waiting for the first snipe to come. He chased his first one at the beginning of September. He made his first kill much sooner than my first two peregrines. Just after ten attacks he got his first snipe, but he always tried hard to chase them. Soon he was killing on a regular basis. We began to work on his pitch and soon he was ripping the





sky and climbing to around 300 m or more. We soon realized that he could not kill snipe from such a high pitch despite trying hard. After two or three weeks of not killing, he was desperate enough to go after other prey which happened to fly by. When he killed two birds in that category in three days, I knew that we had to change his flight pitch. For such high attacks, I would need huge size bogs which cannot always be provided easily on most days. I decided to reduce his pitch and began to flush at around 120-150 m pitch altitude and, at that flight level, he became deadly for snipe. After the season had ended, when I was preparing him for moult, disaster happened: he was killed by a harris hawk who

had broken a swivel. It was a heartbreaking waste of a small snipe hawk with such great potential. With this little tiercel and my setter, I was fortunate enough to have taken 51 snipe in the past season.

To be successful in snipe hawking, an excellent snipe dog is very important. The dog must be able to point for a long period of time and – what I found very important – flush precisely on command, even from a long distance. I'm fortunate to have a second generation red Irish setter, with which I am very happy.

I have filmed many of my tiercel's flights. You can watch them on YouTube if you search "snipe hawking", or visit my Facebook profile.

### Snipe hawking in Ireland *by Xavier Morel*

With snipe hawking in Ireland, I discovered one of the nicest forms of falconry that could exist, and, above all, some of the nicest people I have ever met. The quarry is tremendous, the scenery beautiful, and the work of the dogs is amazing.

It is, for me, one of the few pure waiting-on forms of falconry that is left in Europe, combining companionship, true wild game, scenery and dog work in a perfect way.

Nowadays, we are too used to spotting our game through the car window, while forgetting how nice it is to just be outside and enjoy the landscape and watch the dogs work for us.

The abundance of the game is also very important, which is true for the snipe populations in Ireland. I have known days that ten falcons could be flown, and flushed several times in some cases, in less than three hours' time. Also, the quality of the game is incredible; in my opinion, it is one of the most difficult quarries for waiting-on birds, perhaps only surpassed by sandgrouse which are probably even faster and more agile. But sandgrouse are also bigger, as snipe weigh just 100-120 g which make them really small prey. The main big difference between sandgrouse and snipe is that with

snipe you can nearly always get a perfect flush, trusting on very good and stable dogs, where the sandgrouse is much more elusive, cannot be worked by a dog and has to be spotted in the distance; they will not allow any mistake from the falcon or the falconer. If a mistake occurs, and a bird is not in place, the sandgrouse will be gone high and far away. On the contrary, the snipe will be there patiently waiting, or another will be found easily if the first one flushed. This doesn't mean it is an easy hunt, all the contrary, but it is a captivating, swift, intelligent prey, and only the best birds will be able to catch some on a regular basis.

I have been lucky to spend a lot of time in Ireland these last seasons, and completely fell in love with the country, the people and obviously the game! It is a difficult game, especially when you are coming from abroad. When you have birds not used to snipe, the adaptation can be very long. Also, the weather conditions must be considered, as many days can be very windy, and you'll need a fit bird with a strong mental capacity. Snipe are a really tough quarry, you have to learn how and when to flush, understand their way of thinking, and their way of escaping. My experience is that a falcon coming from abroad needs a lot of time to get used to





Xavier Morel

more experienced, and thus their falconry gets better day after day. Most of the local falconers use tiercels, if possible of local breed.

I have been lucky to travel and hunt a lot throughout Europe, and for me it definitely is one of the most beautiful forms of falconry that can be seen and experienced. And I for sure will be back often to catch up with the friends I have made there and with whom I continue to share this exceptional falconry.

Fran  
Bolínches  
Gomes-Torres

the game before becoming successful; it has to ameliorate its hunting skills, and the best plan is to spend several weeks in Ireland in order to have a chance to catch some. Arriving with an experienced and confirmed hunting bird is indispensable to have a chance of becoming successful.

Snipe seem easy to catch when you see Irish falconers catching them, but it is absolutely not the case. I think Irish falconers perfectly understand the game, and the way to train their falcons and their dogs. I also noticed a clear evolution in their falconry practices over the last years. In the beginning, they considered snipe to be impossible, until Martin Brereton started to catch them on a regular basis, and others falconers joined him in the challenge.

Now they know that snipe can be caught on a regular basis, and those same falconers are changing, evolving together with their birds, looking for style, pitches, enjoying a miss with a spectacular stoop from a big pitch, where they would have said before that it is no use to have such a high-flying falcon. I noticed this evolution this last season: the style of the flights really improved a lot, the falconers take more risks, are more patient at the flush, aim at higher pitches, get every day





Ireland, autumn 2016 *by Anya Aseeva*

A tiercel is climbing hard into the gusts of westerly wind. I follow his steady progress through my binoculars until he becomes a mere dark spot against overcast Irish skies. But if I stand still for too long, my feet will sink into the spongy bog beneath me, so I move, using tiny islands of wet heather to jump my way closer to the dog on point. The only thing that seems important right now is this dog, which looks unnaturally still as if frozen into the ground. The air is heavy with silence and waiting. The tiercel patrols the sky in wide circles high above a small crowd of spectators, who look transfixed and statue-like. I can hardly breathe in anticipation; my heart is bursting with excitement. The pointer creeps closer and closer. Suddenly, a signal breaks the silent spell and in a mad rush the pointer forces the snipe from cover. Binoculars are raised towards the sky now, eyes sharply focused on the tiny dot floating in the clouds as it begins to grow larger and larger. The tiercel is falling! He slices the air in a vertical stoop like a missile. Barely missing the ground, he rockets past me, leaving my ears burning with the sound of crashing air. I get a glimpse of the wild look in his eyes and this sends a wave of shivers down my spine. He stoops one more time towards the panicking snipe, and then it's all over. The sun makes a shy attempt to illuminate and ease the tense crowd. We regroup and relax for a few moments until another tiercel takes to the skies above this wide wet desert.

I was born in Russia with wild Siberian forests all around me. My father often took me hunting hare and capercaillie when I was little. Yet, falconry wasn't something that was practised where I grew up, so it found me by surprise when I was already an adult. Before joining the Irish Hawking Club (IHC), I gained some experience working at Ireland's School of Falconry and flying rooks with a female Harris' hawk. In 2016, my husband Ed and I obtained a licence to take a wild eyass sparrowhawk, but sadly there were not enough chicks in the nests. Then we had Archie, a male goshawk, lent to us by a fellow IHC falconer. There is a part of me that wants to be an austringer, but my heart always gravitates towards those moments of intense raw beauty when a tiercel starts to climb into the westerly wind.

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Anya Aseeva







### Initiation into snipe hawking – Ireland 2016 *by Dick ten Bosch*

In the autumn of 2016, Max Kotov and I flew into Dublin. Coming from Moscow, we enjoyed the green country and the mild weather which felt like summer at home. We slowly drove to Sneem making stops at each and every thing which drew our attention: a group of boys with greyhounds and a freshly killed hare, a village market, an ancient church. We bought typical Irish caps and lunched in a tearoom filled with noisy Irish ladies with shopping bags. We reached the hotel after dark and joined the happy circus which constitutes an annual IAF meeting.

The landscape around Sneem was of a rough beauty: mountains, hills, moors, meadows with sheep, rivers and streams, sea inlets and a constant wind. When driving, tiny villages and pubs – strategically placed at road intersections – would suddenly appear.

Max and I agreed to join as many hunting outings as possible during the IAF meet. We were especially interested in falconers with peregrines who would go after snipe, a type of waiting-on falconry unknown to us. At the appropriate time such a group departed rather suddenly from the parking of the hotel followed by a string of spectator cars. We decided to join them. The column of cars moved through the countryside over very narrow roads at breakneck speed until things came to a sudden halt. The driver of the car in front of us, unable to keep up, was as lost as we were. Many miles later, we found other stragglers and by phoning around were eventually able to establish the location of the hunt, where a group of cars was parked together in the drizzling rain and people were standing in the bog nearby. We had joined the falcons.

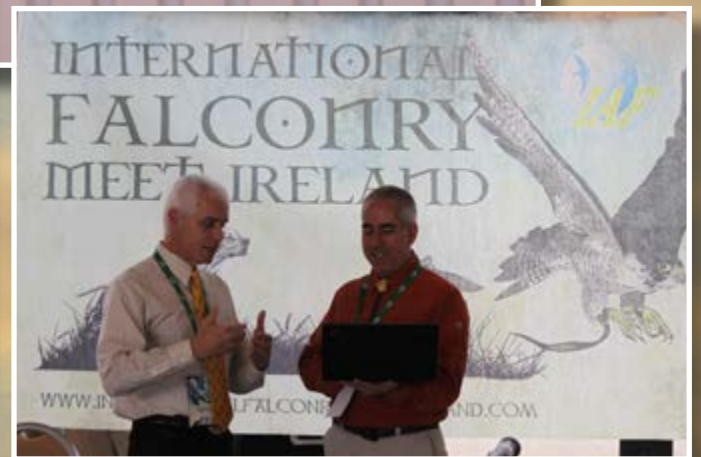
That afternoon only one or two birds would be flown because of the rain and mist. But setters were on point and I watched the first snipe being chased by a falcon. Until then I had considered this type of prey, small, fast-flying, shy birds of the wetlands, to be beyond the capabilities of even the best falconer with the most talented falcon. How wrong I was. In Ireland, we would observe a number of falconers at work taking snipe consistently. Eric Witkowski, Martin Brereton, Xavier Morel and Kevin Marron, to name a few, all had success in the field. Eric even took four of the elusive prey with his immature tiercel and tireless Irish setter in great style. In the following days, we remained with the peregrine group and saw flights to be remembered for a very long time. This is how we became acquainted with snipe hawking.

On the third day Max suddenly had to go home, having received unpleasant news from Russia. He took a taxi to Cork and was gone. However, thanks to the modern media, he was able to continue to follow Eric's successes in the field and even saw him reach the magic number of 50 snipe later in the season. Nowadays we can be in many places at the same time if we want to.

In hindsight, I regret not having seen any trained sparrowhawks being flown. I do have to return for that. However, the falcon waiting on over snipe was a new phenomenon for me, and as it was executed with such perfection during those rainy autumn days in Ireland, it will not be soon forgotten. Altogether, I have two excellent reasons to return to Ireland one day.



# IAF AGM 2016 IRELAND







*Photos by  
Sue Cecchini and Edgar Alvirde*





*Hunter Abylkhak Turlybaev*  
*Painting by Esengali Sadirbayev*

