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# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF **FALCONRY**

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



2020





# Storm



Parent reared and bred by Falcon Mews, the younger of the two male Gyr x Barbarys trained and owned by Simon Tyers. Spent 3 weeks in a hack chamber prior to training. 3 x Intermewed. Picture was taken in South Staffordshire by Simon's wife Julie, on the 2nd of November 2019

The details of this particular flight:

Total Distance: 6.8 miles

Max Speed: 123 mph

Max Alt: 1462 ft

Avg Climb Rate: 127 ft / min

Average Speed: 23 mph

42 partridge were taken during the 2019/20 season making a career total of 128 so far. He has always been a natural mounter and an absolute pleasure to handle. He flies like a Gyr, taking a lot of sky and has an average pitch of over 800' for the season. He is totally wedded to partridge and always prefers to start every flight from a block on top of the vehicle and never fails to perform. Those that have witnessed him hunting are always impressed by his ability. His light breast is somewhat of a downside as it makes him disappear from view easily at pitch. It also needs constant attention to keep him looking immaculate.





Bruce Haak in the field near Boise, Idaho, USA (2010)

## Editorial

When the pandemic suddenly struck, we were locked up in our house in the country side. From one day to the next, our daily routine changed completely: Our son would have his school lessons at home through Skype and would miss his friends, my wife would continue her daily conference calls with her office from home, while in the evening we would watch a movie together to finish the day in a pleasant way. My own days have been filled with looking after the moulting hawks and the setter, bringing in supplies and working on the *International Journal* together with the other members of the team: Ewa, David, Maurice and Noel. Thanks to the modern means of communication, again this year preparing the *Journal* with friends was a pleasure and even a distraction from the harsh events outside. I am pleased to inform you that Noel Hyde from New Zealand has agreed to share some of his time and falconry experience with us, editing and correcting.

Among our readers there must be many who are facing a very challenging time, when even loss of life has become a daily reality. On behalf of the *International Journal* team, we wish you strength in these difficult times. We hope that this edition will bring you some pleasure and diversion, calling to mind all our hawking memories of the past seasons and giving hope of seasons to come.

*Dick ten Bosch*  
Senior Editor

## Editorial Committee



DICK TEN BOSCH



MAURICE NICHOLSON



NOEL HYDE

# 2020

# CONTENTS



Photo credits Patrick Morel

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- 3** Editorial: *Dick ten Bosch*
- 6** A Word from the President: *Majed Ali Al Mansoori*
- 10** Hawking Season 2019 in Russia: *Dmitrij Rodionov*
- 15** Fabergé Kovsh: *Christiane Winkler*
- 16** Hawking the Carrion Crow: *Nick Fox*
- 27** A Foundation to Build to Upon: *Hilary White*
- 28** The Traditional Falconry Show at Hamarikyu Garden in Tokyo: *Kazuyuki Kaneko*
- 32** Red Grouse Hawking in Scotland or the Art of Perfection: *Patrick Morel*
- 38** The 2019-20 Falconry Season in Aguascalientes, Mexico: *Martin Guzman Lasagabaster*
- 41** Hawking Trip to Scotland (2019): *Arnoud Heijke and Willem Windau*
- 47** The Origin and History of Korean Falconry: *Dong Seok Woo*
- 51** Winter Grouse Hawking: *Matt Gage*
- 58** Falconry at the Aragonese Court of Naples (15th century): *Baudouin Van den Abeele*
- 62** His Majesty's Secret Falcon Names: King Ferrante I of Aragon's collection of names: *Michela Del Savio*
- 67** Hawking in Argentina with the Bicolored Hawk (*Accipiter bicolor*): *Fabian Zancocchia*
- 69** Partridge and Pheasant Hawking in the English Midlands 2019/20: *Simon Tyers*
- 75** Return of the Wanderer: *Elisabeth Leix*
- 78** A Story With a Happy Ending: A Gyrfalcon Tiercel at Hack: *Xavier Morel*
- 82** IAF AGM 2019 Spain





**Front cover:** Mature female Gyr falcon *Snowflight*.  
This bird was presented to Roger Upton in 2007  
by a falconry friend from Saudi Arabia, where she was  
probably flown at houbara. Painting by Mark Upton (2007).

**Back cover:** Immature wild female prairie merlin (*Falco columbarius richardsonii*) on a fence post. The rather full crop could be an indication that it has just returned from a successful hunt. Photographed in 2003 in NE Colorado, USA, by Rob Palmer, using a 500 mm lens plus 2x extender.



#### Photo Credits Journal edition 2020

Baudouin van den Abeele, Leopold Amory, Jeus Bautista, Dr. Sten Bergman, Nirav Bhatt, Biblioteca della Regione Sicilia Palermo, Biblioteca universitaria Valencia Spain, Ralph Courjaret, Colin Dilcock, Nick Fox, Matt Gage, Elena Guitierrez, Martin Guzman, Arnoud Heijke, Verity Johnson, Gwang Eon Kim, Leandro Lara, Elisabeth Leix, Klaus Leix, Patrick Morel, Rob Palmer, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio El Escorial Madrid, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Leonardo Martin Roberts, Dmitrij Rodionov, Veronika Rodionova, Macarena Rodriguez Fuentes, Michela del Savio, Schmidt Kunstauktionen Dresden OHG, Julie Tylers, Mark Upton, Tim Wilson, Willem Windau, DongSeok Woo, Yale University Library New Haven USA, Fabian Zancocchia.

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تتطلب إجراءات وآليات العمل المُتبعة في الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة IAF، أن يُقدّم الرئيس تقريراً سنوياً عن إنجازات العام الماضي وما تمّ إحرازه من تقدّم، إضافة لعرض الخطط المُستقبلية للاتحاد والطموحات والأمال المتوقعة للصقارة بشكل عام. ولقد تمّ إعداد هذا التقرير، ليس فقط من أجل للاجتماع السنوي لمجلس الوفود الأعضاء، ولكن أيضاً لإدراجه في هذه المطبوعة التي بين أيديكم. إنّ سنة 2020 هي السنة الثانية من رئاستي للاتحاد، وهذه هي الممرّة الثانية أيضاً التي أقدم فيها "كلمة الرئيس". وأودّ بهذه المناسبة التأكيد على أنه في حين أنّ النجاحات العظيمة ممكنة بالفعل في المستقبل، فإنّ الإنجازات الكبيرة في الماضي ينبغي أن يتم تقديرها أيضاً، كما يجب الحرص على حسن التخطيط الاستراتيجي للمستقبل لتجنّب العقبات والمصاعب.

في كانون الأول/ ديسمبر من عام 2018، جلست على كرسي الرئيس للمرة الأولى ورحبت حينها بوفود الأعضاء والأصدقاء في الاتحاد من 33 دولة في اجتماع مجلس الوفود في مدينة كارمونا بالأندلس، مُلتقى الذكريات الجميلة بالنسبة لي: ففي عام 2003 في بلدة "خيريز دي لا فرونتيرا" أصبحت دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة عضواً في الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة للمرة الأولى.

تعود العلاقات والروابط بين الصقارين في بلدنا ومنطقتنا عموماً، مع نظرائهم من الصقارين في الأندلس لقرون عديدة خلت، ولقد كان من دواعي فخرنا وسرورنا العام الماضي أن تمكّننا من تجديد تلك الصلات والروابط المُهمّة، ويسرّني اليوم أن أتوجه بالشكر لـ سينور ديجو باريجا أوبريغون، رئيس AECCA، لإتاحته الفرصة لعقد ذلك الاجتماع المُميّز، والذي قُمت فيه بتقديم تقريرتي الأول كرئيس للاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة.

تمثّلت استراتيجيتي للاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة، في جعله منظمة دولية غير حكومية ذاتية الاكتفاء والتمويل. لدينا اليوم لجنة استشارية موسعة تتكون من مجلس الإدارة (المُختص بالمسائل القانونية والإدارية، وفقاً للقانون الأساسي للاتحاد) إضافة لاثنتي عشر مجموعة عمل، ست منها تعمل تحت إشراف نواب الرئيس الإقليميين، وست مجموعات أخرى تختص بموضوعات مشتركة بين جميع المناطق. ومن خلال هذا النظام الجديد للجنة الاستشارية أصبحنا نستعين بالعديد من الخبراء والمتطوعين في عملنا (حوالي 80 شخصاً) مما يجعل الـ IAF منظمة أكثر شمولاً بدرجة كبيرة، فضلاً عن منح اهتمام خاص للمُنضمّين حديثاً في الاتحاد منذ العام 2017 حيث تمّ تنظيم مهرجان الصقارة في دولة الإمارات.

ولقد نشطت كل مجموعة من مجموعات العمل تلك هذا العام، وبناءً على الأهداف الواردة في القانون الأساسي للاتحاد، تبنّى مجلس الإدارة مهمة ورؤية واضحة لتوجيهنا، بما في ذلك تحديد أربعة مجالات رئيسة كأولوية، وهي: 1. مراقبة ودراسة القوانين المُعتمدة على المستوى الدولي لتقييمها ومعرفة مدى تأثيرها على الصقارة، والتأكد من إمكانية التنسيق مع الهيئات التنظيمية الدولية والمشاركة في عملياتها. 2. توفير الوصول لأفضل الممارسات والحصول على المعرفة الواسعة وضمان جودتها ودقتها. 3. تحقيق تواصل أكثر فعالية مع الأعضاء والمنظمين والجمهور ودعم وحدات IAF الأخرى في متطلبات التواصل الخاصة بها. 4. وضع برامج لتنسيق فعاليات الأعضاء وتشجيع النشاطات الفردية لهم.

في السنة الأولى هذه من رئاستي للاتحاد العالمي للصقارة، تمكّننا من تحقيق العديد من الأهداف التي تمّ وضعها في اجتماع بامبرغ في ألمانيا العام 2018: فكان أهم دور للاتحاد هو تمثيل الصقارين في جميع أنحاء العالم، وقد أنجزنا ذلك من خلال حضور فعالياتهم، ومنها على سبيل المثال: مالطا (Welfare)، كرواتيا (اجتماع المجموعة الأوروبية للاستخدام المُستدام في الاتحاد الدولي لحماية الطبيعة (IUCN)، باراغواي (مشاريع الصون/ مخاطر الصعق بالكهرباء للطيور)، الصين (اجتماعات مع الحكومة)، إيطاليا (اليونسكو)، جنوب إفريقيا (مشاريع الصون)، الولايات المتحدة (مشاريع الصون)، وأبوظبي- الإمارات العربية المتحدة (العمل ضدّ التجارة غير القانونية)، وباكستان (اجتماعات مع الحكومة)، ومصر (اجتماعات مع الحكومة).







في أوروبا، تابعنا إنشاء أندية للصقارة في كل من لوكسمبورج وفنلندا والنرويج، لتتم بالتالي إضافة ثلاث دول جديدة في قائمة الدول التي يُمثلها الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة IAF. كما عُقد اجتماع نورديك البارز في جزيرة مون، والذي تم استضافته من قبل رينيه راسك برون، الرئيس السابق لنادي الصيد بالصقور الدنماركي، وذلك استناداً للنجاح المذهل الذي حققه ناديه في جعل الصيد بالصقور ممكناً من الناحية القانونية مرة أخرى في الدنمارك بعد فجوة طويلة دامت 50 عاماً. وفي أوروبا أيضاً، تم تطوير بوابة وشبكة Perdix، حيث أضافت دول أخرى تجارياً وكان هناك الكثير من العمل الذي تم إنجازه وفقاً لمتطلبات اليونسكو، ونحن نأمل في توسيع القائمة الدولية من 18 إلى 25 خلال العامين المقبلين.

في اجتماع كارمونا أيضاً، رحبنا جميعاً بكريم روسيلون إثر انتخابه نائباً لرئيس الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة عن منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا، والذي قام بالفعل بعمل مُميز لدفع الأمور نحو الأمام من خلال تنظيم الاجتماعات المهمة للاتحاد الدولي لحماية الطبيعة في تونس، وورشة العمل في القاهرة مع أعضاء نادي الجوارح المصري ومسؤولين حكوميين. ولقد ساهم كريم كذلك في تعزيز الروابط مع الصقارين في شمال إفريقيا، ونحن نأمل أن تلعب الأندية في جميع أنحاء المنطقة دوراً أكثر فعالية في IAF هذا العام.

كذلك فقد تم في كارمونا انتخاب Dan Cechinni لولايته الثانية والأخيرة لمدة ثلاث سنوات، وذلك كنائب لرئيس IAF للأمريكتين، فيما تم اعتماد اقتراح تغيير القانون التأسيسي للاتحاد العالمي للصقارة بالإجماع لإضافة منصب نائب رئيس أمريكا اللاتينية ومنطقة البحر الكاريبي. وسوف يبدأ شغل هذا المنصب الجديد في يناير 2021 حيث ستجرى الانتخابات في اجتماع مجلس الدول الأعضاء لعام 2020. ونرى أنّ هذه الخطوة سوف تُساهم كثيراً في مساعدة تلك المنطقة المهمة على تطوير ثقافة الصقارة لديها، إضافة لزيادة حضور IAF في أمريكا اللاتينية وفي توحيد الأندية المحلية. ونودّ أن نُشير إلى أنّه في العام المقبل، سوف تستضيف جمعية الصقارة في أمريكا الشمالية NAFA اجتماع مجلس أعضاء الـ IAF في كيرني- نبراسكا، في السهول الوسطى. فإذا لم يسبق لكم أن حضرتم اجتماع NAFA من قبل، أو لم تذهبوا إلى كيرني، ندعوكم للحضور بالتأكيد.

إننا في الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة، نفخر كذلك بتمثيل الصقارين في جميع المؤسسات الدولية ذات الصلة، وبفضل ذلك فإنّه لدينا اليوم علاقات أفضل بكثير معها جميعاً. ولقد أقمنا أيضاً صلات أوثق مع BirdLife International و CMS ومنظمة اليونسكو، وعملنا على تعزيز المكانة اللائقة والسمعة المرموقة التي يتمتع بها الصقارون في كل مكان. ومن بين الإنجازات التي تحظى بالتقدير بشكل خاص، العلاقة الوثيقة التي أصبحنا ننتمع بها اليوم مع مؤسسة التمويل الدولية، مجموعة البنك الدولي، والتي تعمل على وضع إرشادات البنك الدولي بشأن البيئة والصحة والسلامة للصناعة المصرفية لتمويل مشروعات البنية التحتية الكبيرة. ونحن نعمل معهم اليوم بهدف الحرص على تجنب مخاطر الصعق الكهربائي للطيور ضمن معايير وشروط نقل وتوزيع الطاقة الكهربائية عبر اعتماد بند "صديق للطيور" كمعيار أساسي في الاتفاقيات المستقبلية لتلك المشاريع. ومع انعقاد العديد من فعاليات المؤتمرات الدولية المُختصة هذا العام في آسيا، فقد كان للاتحاد العالمي للصقارة حضور قوي فيها من خلال نائب الرئيس في آسيا Keiya Nakajima، ومسؤول أعمال الصون في الاتحاد Janusz Sielicki.

في الختام، إنّه لمن دواعي سرورنا أن نُحيطكم علماً أنّه بات بإمكاننا اليوم إرسال الكثير من المعلومات والرسائل الإيجابية حول الصقارة في منشوراتنا، الإلكترونية والمطبوعة منها، والتي تصل الآن لأكثر من 10000 شخص عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، وأيضاً من خلال النشرات الإلكترونية والرسالة الإخبارية الإلكترونية، ولأكثر من 2000 قارئ ومُهتم في المجلة المطبوعة، والتي أصبحت اليوم متاحة بعدّة لغات بفضل مجموعة الترجمات التي يُديرها فريق شاب.

شكراً لكم جميعاً على العمل الذي تقومون به من أجل الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة IAF، ومن أجل الصقارة ككل وجهود صونها والحفاظ عليها.







## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT 2020

President of AECCA, for enabling this prestigious meeting. At that event, I gave my first report as IAF President.

My strategy for the IAF is to make it a self-sustaining, self-funding International Non-Governmental Organisation. We now have a much extended Advisory Committee, consisting of the Board (concerned with legal and administrative matters, according to the Constitution) and twelve Working Groups. Six of these are under the Regional Vice-presidents, and six are on topics common to all regions. This new system for the Advisory Committee means that we now include many more experts and volunteers in our work (around 80 people) making the IAF a much more inclusive organisation, and paying particular attention to the young people who have come into the organisation since the 2017 Festival in the UAE.

Each of the Working Groups has been very active this year and, based on the objectives in the IAF Constitution, the Board has adopted a clear mission and vision to guide us, including prioritisation of four key areas: 1. Monitoring regulations at international level and assessing them for their impact on falconry, making sure we have access to the international regulatory bodies and that we can participate in their processes; 2. Providing access to best practice and broad knowledge, ensuring its quality and accuracy; 3. More effective communications with members, regulators and the public and supporting other IAF units in their communications requirements; 4. Devising programs to coordinate member activities and encourage individual member activity.

In this first year of the presidency we achieved several of the goals set out at the Bamberg 2018 meeting: the most important role of the IAF is to represent falconers

Our conventions and precedents dictate that every IAF President reports annually on the past year's progress and on future plans for the IAF and hopes for falconry in general. This report is made not only at the annual Council of Delegates Meeting, but also in this, our flagship publication, *The International Journal of Falconry*. 2020 is the second year of this presidency and in this, my second "Word from the President", I would like to emphasise that, while great things are possible for the future, the great things of the past must also be appreciated and potential pitfalls for the future must be identified.

In December of 2018, I sat in the president's chair for the first time and welcomed delegates and friends of the IAF from 33 countries to our Council of Delegates Meeting in Carmona, Andalusia, a place of fond memories for me: it was in Jerez de la Frontera in 2003 that the UAE first became an IAF member. Links between my own region's falconers and those of *Al Andalus* go back many, many centuries. We were proud, last year, to be able to renew those links and I am pleased to thank Señor Diego Pareja Obregon,



around the world and we have done this through attending their events, for example in: Malta (*Welfare*), Croatia (*European Sustainable Use Group Meeting of IUCN*), Paraguay (*Conservation/Electrocution*), China (*Meetings with Government*), Italy (*UNESCO*), South Africa (*Conservation*), United States (*Conservation*) and Abu Dhabi, UAE (*Against Illegal Trade*), Pakistan (*Meetings with Government*) and Egypt (*Meetings with Government*).

In Europe, we saw the creation of clubs in Luxembourg, Finland and Norway, adding another three countries to those that the IAF represents. A landmark Nordic Meeting was held on the Isle of Møn, hosted by René Rask Bruun, former President of the Dansk Falkejagt Klub, building on his club's amazing success in having made falconry legally possible again in Denmark, after a 50 year gap. Also in Europe, the Perdix portal developed, with new countries adding their experiences and there was much work done on UNESCO submissions. We are hoping to increase the international list from 18 to 25 in the next two years.

At his election as IAF Vice-president for MENA, in Carmona, we welcomed Karim Rousselon; he has already moved things forward, with important IUCN meetings in Tunisia, and a workshop in Cairo with members of the Raptors Club of Egypt and government officials. He has strengthened links with the falconers in North Africa and we hope the clubs across the region will play a more active role in the IAF this year.

At Carmona, Dan Cechinni was elected to his second, and final, three-year term as IAF Vice-president for the Americas and a motion changing the IAF Constitution to add a vice-presidency for Latin America and the Caribbean was passed unanimously. This vice-presidency will begin in January 2021 and an election will take place at the 2020 Council of Delegates meeting. This move will do a lot to help the region develop its falconry culture, increase the IAF presence in Latin America and in uniting local clubs. Next year

the IAF Council of Delegates Meeting will be hosted by NAFA in Kearney, Nebraska, right in the central plains. If you have never been to a NAFA Meet, or never been to Kearney, be sure to come.

We are also proud of representing falconers at all of the international conventions; because of this we have a much better relationship with all of them. We have also made closer ties with Bird Life International, with CMS and with UNESCO and we have enhanced the reputation enjoyed by falconers everywhere. A particularly welcome achievement is the close contact we now enjoy with the International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group, which is creating World Bank Environmental, Health and Safety Guidelines for the banking industry for the financing of large infrastructural projects. We are working with them to add bird electrocution into their Electric Power Transmission and Distribution Standard, a "bird friendly" clause for future agreements. Several international convention events this year were based in Asia and the IAF had a strong presence at them through VP Asia Keiya Nakajima and IAF Conservation Officer Janusz Sielicki.

It is pleasing to know that we can send out so much positive information about falconry in our publications, which now go out to over 10,000 people electronically on social media, through the eBulletins and through the eNewsletter. More than 2,000 people are reached through *The International Journal of Falconry*, the only publication of the IAF which appears in print, now available in many languages, thanks to the youth controlled *Translations Group*.

THANK YOU ALL for the work you do for IAF, for falconry and for conservation.

*Majed Ali Al Mansoori*

*President of the International Association for Falconry  
and Conservation of Birds of Prey*





# Hawking Season 2019 in Russia

by Dmitriy Rodionov

Photo credits Veronika Rodionova

In the middle of October, nature is sleeping it seems. There is a tone of melancholy in this season, quite a sombre season for everyone – for everyone, that is, except a hunter. The setter passionately and quickly searches through the field bordering the forest in the distance. Into our third hour of hunting, a feeling of complete emptiness arises in me. But what is this?! The Gordon setter gets a weak scent, and “freezes”. A tense moment in hunting: no mistakes allowed here. The falconer unhoods the falcon which, quickly looking around, leaves the fist and, with rapid wingbeats, gains height. The peregrine knows not to waste time: reaching the necessary height, she waits-on. It’s time! The falconer approaches his setter and shouts “pill!” (“flush!”) Two mature black grouse cocks (*Lyrurus tetrix*) spring up. The falcon, speeding up with short wing beats, rushes down, gradually increasing in speed. This is a real stoop! At this moment of time, nothing else in the falconer’s world exists for him anymore. Two pairs of eyes, those of the setter and falconer, observe the flight, full of hope. The experienced black grouse knows that the only chance to survive lies in the forest which is too far away. The falcon, which is now in horizontal flight, inevitably reaches the bird. We hear the sudden strike and the grouse falls down in the grass. The peregrine pulls up from the stoop, turns

over and swiftly lands on her trophy. Grouse feathers drift slowly to the ground, a reminder of the “tragedy” that has just unfolded.

Hawking for feathered game in Russia opens on 25<sup>th</sup> July and ends on 31<sup>st</sup> December. The season dates and quotas of quarry are the same as for hunters shooting over gundogs. Any citizen of the country who has reached 18 years and has a hunter’s license, and one for keeping a bird of prey, has the right to practice falconry. Initially, when the season opens on 25<sup>th</sup> of July, one may hunt only the great snipe (*Gallinago media*), common snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and the corncrake (*Crex crex*). The grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*) and black grouse seasons then open from 5<sup>th</sup> of August and, from about the middle of August, one is allowed to hunt ducks and all other feathered game species. Due to different climatic conditions the dates in regions may vary, but fall within the dates mentioned above.

My hawking team consists of a female *Falco peregrinus caucasicus*, five years old and named *Klava*, and two Gordon setters – *Mafi* who is five years old and *Inika*, aged ten. In this season we have added an adult male red-naped shaheen (*Falco peregrinus babylonicus*) to our team. We began to fly early because my peregrine was not put up to moult in time and constantly flew throughout the whole summer.



During the 2019 season, I began to use the Marshall GPS system, which greatly simplified control over the falcon and the setter (a common GPS transmitter was placed on the dog as well). In general, our hawking takes place in fields with tall grass and shrubs and so it can be very hard, sometimes even impossible, to see a dog on point. Another useful feature of using this system is that I could not find several partridges which were knocked down over grass and shrubs. It is likely that they could be lost in the absence of this telemetry, though using it means that the dogs may be sent in to locate them.

The great snipe and black grouse are the most interesting early-season quarry species for me, because grey partridge are still very weak on the wing. The young black grouse at the beginning of August can be highly distinctive, differing by age and size, though the flight is not always tangibly successful in terms of putting quarry in the bag.

The black grouse broods often feed on the same fields as the coveys of grey partridge and, as a result, they are subject to the falcon's attacks. The passage great snipe, strangely enough, occurs in the same places. Hunts on great snipe are very exciting. Having observed a falcon in the sky, the snipe will try to flee from the setter, running on rather than flushing. My



dogs have often followed behind a great snipe for some 150-200 metres before we could press the quarry sufficiently to flush it under a falcon. In contrast to the common snipe, when a falcon is in a dominant position overhead the great snipe does not fly up into the sky, but tries to fall down into grass or shrubs. This is when a setter should actively chase it into taking flight.

By early **September**, the grey partridge have become stronger, and so hunting them becomes more







exciting and captivating. Since I mainly hunt not far from Moscow, where the ground accessible for hawking and the area in general is not very open and strongly intersected, we decided to move much closer to an area further south to hunt on extensive open landscapes. The trip was the result of our joint efforts, and other members of the Moscow Falconers' Club participated there as well. The weather being summer-like, we camped in tents in a picturesque place with a fabulous view over our surroundings. The game was mainly the same: partridge, black grouse and quail (*Coturnix coturnix*). The latter can be found everywhere, but it is not the desired quarry and is, indeed, even an obstacle to waiting-on flights with falcons. Setters may often point them in a manner that is hard to distinguish from their marking of partridge or black grouse, especially if they have found a quail's brood. On our return to the Moscow region, hawking

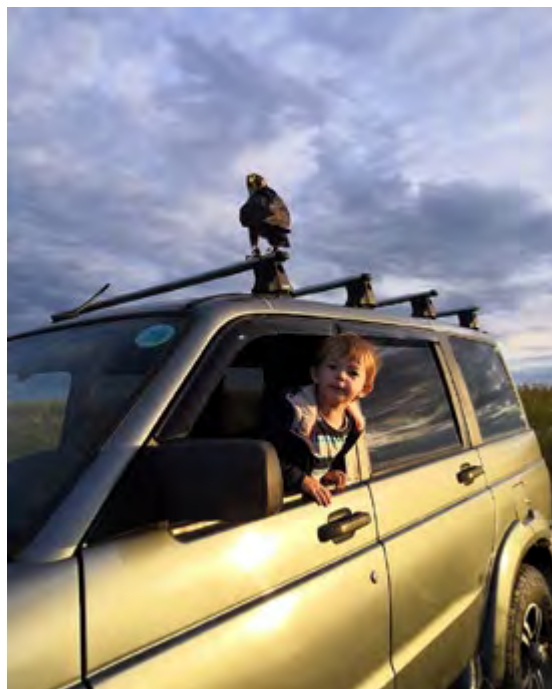
concentrated primarily on partridges and black grouse because the great snipe have almost finished their passage through our region by that time.

Aside from partridge, two corncrakes were taken in September. Over recent years numbers of this formerly common game species for our region have declined, as have our encounters with it. In September the passage corncrake might be met too. This bird gains weight for migration and, as a result, it does not run away from a setter, but sits still as if it is frozen and keeps the setter pointing well. The corncrake does not offer much in the way of an interesting flight for falcons, but it is noteworthy since it is said to be an unexpected quarry.

By **October** the grey partridge is becoming the main quarry for hawking. At this time of year, the black grouse become very cautious, often feeding in trees, eating birch buds. As a consequence, opportunities to







fly hawks at them become quite rare. At the beginning of October we undertook a trip to a falconers' field meeting in the Lipetsk region: the venue was about 400 km away from Moscow. This offered some wonderful hawking opportunities with adequate numbers of grey partridge. We hunted together with falconers from different regions of Russia, sharing experiences, and fresh eyes are always useful.

At the end of the month the weather was very warm and sunny, so we decided to organise a camping trip to the Tula region to visit a well-known falconer. Before leaving, I had put the red-naped shaheen up for moult because there was not enough time to hunt with two birds by now. Because we were hunting partridges in very unfamiliar habitats, we did not take a single bird at all during three days of hunting. The area is a plain, intersected by 20 to 30 deep ravines that not only present complications for the movement of falconers and setters, but also pose problems for the falcon. Partridge feed out on the plain, but then take refuge in the ravines from the attacking falcon. Successful flights were finished with a blow, after which the struck

partridge rolled down the slope and hid in the grass. We might have changed our hunting tactics, for instance driving partridges into the ravine before putting up a falcon for them to be flushed but, unfortunately, didn't have enough time because early on the third day we had to return to Moscow.

**November** in this year was wet and windy, with fogs from time to time. Partridges had already gained enough experience by this point in the season, and the majority of coveys had learnt how to avoid the falcons. Nevertheless, the peregrine demonstrated very clever and beautiful flights. The setters worked with practically no mistakes at all, and hawking continued to be enjoyable for all of us.

There was a pack of black grouse in one place not too far from the forest, on the oat crops specially planted as a lure for wild boars. Casts of falcons were flown, but we had bad luck all the time, mainly due to strong winds or sometimes to fog. Once, my peregrine was attacked by an adult female goshawk that was also hunting the grouse there at the same time. The black grouse almost always evaded attacks, except for some



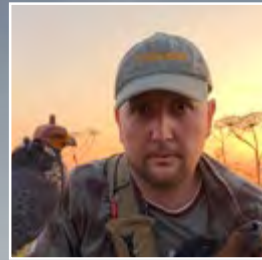




lost feathers, skilfully using the wind and natural shelter to avoid the falcon. Partridges frequented these same areas and, periodically, they too became the objects of the falcons' successful flights.

**December** is the last month of the legal hawking season in Russia. Thanks to the fact that this year has been abnormally warm, we hunted practically without snow but, in most cases there was bad visibility and rainy conditions. During the period of abundant snow the partridges go closer to human settlements, but driving cars through residential areas can get complicated. During this season, however, we were fortunate to be able to hunt until 31<sup>st</sup> December without any problems. The falcons flew well and the Gordon setters found the game, including black grouse, in all weather conditions. During the closing of the season, we had a successful flight at a black grouse cock and, on New Year's Eve, were successful in bagging a brace of partridge.

The peregrine demonstrated her reliability and excellence during this season, climbing to 150-250 metres and waiting-on well, staying in the sky for hours. It was very interesting to observe how the falcon, especially when flown in a familiar place, outwitted her quarry's attempts to use shelter and ground relief: she would not begin her attack until the partridge had left cover and were vulnerable. We often made more than one flight at partridge, having to do this in the case of the first one being unsuccessful, or where the game had enough time to bail, reach cover or run away after being struck. The falcon easily climbed several times, often correcting her pitch and gaining more height. The total head count was not exactly calculated, but I know



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I began handling hawks in 1990-91, at 12 years of age, with a common kestrel being the first bird which I flew to the fist. After finishing school in 1994, I successfully flew a tiercel goshawk at crows and pigeons. However, since flying my first peregrine in 2003, I have switched over almost completely to waiting-on flights with longwings. I have generally flown sakers, gyrfalcons and gyr x peregrine hybrids, although the peregrine still remains my favourite: I currently have two – a five year-old falcon and a six year-old tiercel. With a total of 25 years' experience in falconry, from 2003 to 2010 I was Executive Director (and founder) of the Russian Falconry Association. In 2013, I founded the Moscow Falconers' Club, serving as its head field officer.

that we took four black grouse, four great snipe, two corncrakes and one jack snipe altogether.

Although some of them were memorable, since this season's flights at grey partridges were relatively numerous, it's quite difficult to describe them all. However, one flight which stands out happened on 8<sup>th</sup> October. It was wonderful hawking weather; chilly and with a virtually clear sky, with no clouds at all. *Inika*, the Gordon setter, found a covey of partridge but the birds, being very well acquainted with falcons, would not lie to the point but ran for a long time, unwilling to take off. As a result, the entire covey went to a pebble road and hid in the roadside grass, where it was later pointed by the setter. At that moment, the peregrine climbed higher and higher but, being preoccupied with trying to locate the partridges hiding there, I did not observe her very attentively. At the critical moment when the covey was being flushed, the falcon had become practically invisible in the sky. Having looked at my phone's screen in order to use the GPS to estimate her precise position, I saw that the falcon was sitting near the car. The data did not change after reloading the Aerovision program and so, convinced that this was a technical bug and with 99-percent certainty of the reliable falcon being above me I decided to flush the game.

I was right in the end. It was the best flight of that season. Having stooped down at a crazy speed, the peregrine almost killed one of partridge and, immediately after throwing up and turning over, she finally fell on her quarry. All this happened in open-space and terrain, and so the setter quickly found the falcon on the kill. Unfortunately, however, as it turned out later, I would never know her height nor the speed of her stoop. I had left my transmitter in the car.







Highly important silver kovsh; Peter Carl Fabergé (1846 – 1920), Moscow, c. 1913.  
Length: approx. 49.3cm; height: 25.7cm; weight: approx. 4.8kg.

# FABERGÉ KOVSH

*by Christiane Winkler, MA*

The *kovsh*, a traditional Russian drinking vessel in the shape of a ship's hull, was in use from the Middle Ages to the 19th century throughout all levels of society. Originally, a *kovsh* was made from wood and used as a mere basic commodity for serving food and drinks. At the beginning of the 18th century, however, the tsar ordered gilded *kovshes* to be produced as awards for special merit or service to the country. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, gold- and silversmiths like Fabergé created exceptional, and frequently monumental, *kovshes* of the highest quality to the personal specifications of private customers.

In 1887, Fabergé opened a branch on Moscow's *Kuznetsky Most*, a most famous boulevard. From 1900 onwards, Fabergé manufactured all kinds of large silver objects in Moscow. At that time, the city could be regarded as the centre of the Russian silversmiths' business, since it was where all major companies had their headquarters and the country's best silversmiths gathered. Another feature of Fabergé's Moscow branch was its specialisation in the Neo-Russian style. Folkloristic themes, and the recollection of Russian history, became popular during the second half of the 19th century. Depictions of heroes, elements of fairy tales, epics or historical facts and personalities

were eagerly sought. These motifs were formed three-dimensionally or placed on objects in relief. Fabergé designed several monumental *kovshes* on the theme of the *bogatyr*, the heroes from the legends of the medieval Kievan *Rus'*. Likewise, the theme of the falconer is deeply rooted in Russian medieval history. Falconry was regarded as one of the most popular pastimes of the Russian aristocracy, especially the *boyars*.

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Since attaining her MA in Art History and Modern English Literature from Tübingen's Eberhard Karls University in 2006, Christiane has worked in the art trade. In 2011, she joined Schmidt Kunstauktionen Dresden OHG (established 2004), where she specialises in decorative arts.

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Photo credits Verity Johnson

# *Hawking the Carrion Crow*

*by Nick Fox*

All around the world, falconers are suffering both from a lack of quarry and a loss of hawking grounds. Nowadays, we have access to some of the finest hawks ever available to falconers. We have all sorts of modern, technical, aids too. Yet, when we are without good numbers of quarry, falconers might as well sit around the fire and tell stories about the 'good old days'. Falconers who hunt game species inevitably have to compete with shooters and, as prices rise, it becomes harder and harder to secure good hawking. As for the land, it's true; they are not making any more of it! Worse still, year after year, more and more fences go up and areas where we once hawked are built over by roads and housing estates. As the landscape becomes more and more fragmented, it becomes almost impossible to find places to fly big falcons at quarry.

Over the past 57 years, I've been fortunate to fly a variety of hawks at many species of quarry, in many countries and amidst some very different cultures. I've found out what I like and what I don't like. Accipiters are wonderful but, like beautiful mahogany boats, I'm happy to go out with them as long as I don't have to look after them! Waiting-on flights at game also leave me somewhat dissatisfied. I like to see the prey having

a chance to show what it is capable of, rather than being knocked down soon after it is flushed. I like variety, unpredictability and excitement and, as far as possible, I like to escape from cars, the modern world and all that it represents.

For my first fifteen or so years of falconry, radio telemetry was not available and we relied on bells. Harris' hawks had not come into vogue either and domestic breeding was still in its infancy. Obtaining a hawk, flying her and managing to bring her home safe each evening was a nightmare, sufficient to test the nerves of the hardiest. One day, I drove for five hours searching for a good slip for my peregrine and I can remember coming home and thinking "am I mad?"

By the end of the 1980s, radio tags had become more reliable and we were breeding some lovely falcons. With effective telemetry, we could afford to take slips in places where we would never have dared before. Of course, the aim is to see the whole flight but if, for some reason, it goes out of sight, it is comforting to switch on those little beeps. It's like bringing a heart attack victim back to life. So, some areas and landscapes which, previously, we had avoided now became hawkable. The question then was *what quarry to hunt?*



I suffer from being a bit of a softy. I don't like to hunt species that are rare and I don't like to hunt during the breeding season, which ruled out spring rook-hawking. Although I've flown a few merlins, I'm not so keen on hunting small birds, especially skylarks. We are all different in our preferences and, perhaps, that is just as well. For me, carrion crows are my sporting quarry of choice. Every man's hand is against them in Britain and, yet, they remain common and we seldom have a problem with lack of prey. They are capable of some great flights, are really clever and will outsmart the falconer and his falcons time after time, sending us home with our tails between our legs. Every flight and every situation is different and presents a new intellectual problem.

Most people hawk crows from cars and I have done a fair bit of that myself, especially when getting young falcons going. However, the temptation is to slip on land where you have no permission and, being a farmer myself, I know how annoying this can be. It doesn't enhance falconry's reputation. It also means that you can only slip from roads and tracks; you cannot access the areas further away. Having been a horseman all my life and keen on hunting with hounds, the obvious thing to do was to use horses. I had used them for many years when manning hawks but using them for serious hawking added a whole new level of complexity to the scene.

As well as finding land that holds crows in a landscape suitable for falconry, the ground needs to be rideable by horses – not one big peat bog, a spider's web of barbed wire fences or rolling fields of corn. Also, you need enough landowners to give you permission, in order to provide a big enough area for a day's sport and for a whole season's sport. Seagulls also make wonderful quarry but can you find adequate numbers of them, day after day, to guarantee slips for each of your falcons? If you are flying only one falcon at the crows, what are you going to do for the rest of the day, once she has had her flights? If you plan for a hawking day of 4-5 hours, you need a slip every 20-30 minutes, say 6-10 flights per day. This means that you need 4-6 falcons in your team. Who is going to carry the spare falcons? This means you need a hawking van, with a couple of falconers aboard, within a mile or so, at all times. It's beginning to get complicated! What happens when a falcon kills in a place that you cannot reach on horseback, maybe in a ravine or by a river? What if you have to dismount and have to run or swim? So, you need at least one other horseman. What happens if there are two or three woods nearby and you cannot tell if the flight will go towards them? To produce good flights, you need a horseman ready at each place. And the horses: are they fit, have they got all their shoes on, can they cross the country and can they carry a falcon and a swung lure? It all sounds easy to start with and it looks great in the





old paintings. It's only when you try to do it that you realise all the twists and turns that are involved.

I thought that maybe we could learn lessons from those who have gone before us? I discussed the management of the *Royal Loo Hawking Club* with the late Joost van de Wall. He wrote a useful book on the subject and translated it into English. I also went to visit the palace at Het Loo several times. Sadly, the heath where they hawked herons is now gone – and so is a pocketful of acorns which I grew into fine oak trees on our farm in Wales. My trees have lasted longer than the club itself, which folded after only a few seasons.

The *Old Hawking Club* in Britain arose from the ashes of the *Royal Loo Hawking Club*. The activities of its members were documented in beautiful detail by the late Roger Upton, MBE. He and I spent many sessions discussing the *OHC* and how to manage crow hawking in a modern landscape. His books detailed many of their hawking days on Salisbury Plain but the elusive part was how they actually did it. They formed a small group, employed professional falconers, purchased passage falcons from the Mollens in Holland and based themselves in pubs or private houses on Salisbury Plain for the season. From there, they rode out each day to the adjacent hawking grounds. Logistically, this limited them to hawking within riding distance of their base every day. This meant a lot of repeat visits to the same hunting ground, which is not an ideal situation.

In Britain, hunting with scent hounds has been traditional for many years, although the first foxhound pack, the Bilsdale, was not established until 1668. In

most hunts, the hounds are kept in one place called the kennels, equivalent to our mews. Some hill packs disperse their hounds amongst the farmers. These hounds are called 'trencher-fed' and brought to the meet each hunting day. The hounds are looked after by a Kennelman who, if he also hunts the hounds, is called the Kennel-Huntsman. The whole equipage is usually run by a committee with a chairperson and financed by subscriptions from the members and fund-raising events. The hunting day is organised by the Master, who may hunt the hounds or may leave it to the Huntsman. The members follow on horses but must always keep behind and out of the way of the hounds. They are kept in order by the Field Master. He is also responsible for making arrangements with all the farmers, to have the hunting take place over their lands. He or she has to visit them all, outline their land boundaries on a hunt map and find out what's to be avoided, such as standing crops or cows calving. They have to make sure all the gates work, especially on boundary fences so that the horses can cross the country without slowing down. This is called 'opening the country.' One district may be hunted on a certain day each week throughout the winter, with the best areas reserved for Saturdays. So, for example, a Master might be in charge of the Tuesday country and will probably live in it. He or she has to make sure that no followers go onto land where they are not allowed and, if any damage is done such as fences broken, has to come back and repair it. Bottles of whisky often exchange hands to mollify indignant farmers.







A meet card is sent to each member, giving the details of when and where the hounds will meet up each day. Followers are expected to wear hunt dress, which is usually a black coat and fawn breeches. After a few years as a subscriber, the follower may be invited to become a member and will be given the hunt button. These engraved buttons are specific to each of the 184 packs of foxhounds in mainland Britain. The coats themselves sometimes have different coloured collars or may be green, mulberry or yellow. The Masters and the hunt servants usually wear “pink” coats, an easily visible, bright red colour, a precursor of the use of hi-vis clothing. Thus, farmers and all those taking part can tell who is who and what they are doing.

The organisation of fox hunting is familiar to farmers and so, when we started crow-hawking in 1991, we adopted many of its traditions. We use a green coat, traditional in falconry since before the *Confederate Hawks* in 1770 (later the *High Ash Club* in 1792), with engraved buttons. Over the years, we have opened up enough country to meet two to three days per week throughout August and September. We hawk the upland areas of Northumberland that border with Scotland. Falconry has been practised in this area since about 670AD, when the falconer on Bewcastle stone cross was carved. It is quite rough country and people do break bones. We do not charge any money to followers but ask for a voluntary ‘cap’ for the air ambulance service. Last season we collected £1,401. Our country extends from the Cheviot Hills up north, running south towards the grouse moors of the North Pennines and extending west to Cumbria. Of this, we only hawk about 100,000 acres, having given up 80,000 acres of army land because of the increasing administrative burden. Mary-Ann Rogers is Field Master for our northern block, which covers the Border and the North Tyne fox hound countries. Archie Courage is Field Master of the southern block, which includes the Tynedale and Haydon hunt countries. Mary Craney covers the western block, which stretches for 15 miles along Hadrian’s Wall. Our mews is based on

a farm, north of the Roman wall, and can accommodate 23 falcons.

Having gradually opened up the country over many years, we also had to put all the other pieces of the jigsaw puzzle together. We have bred our own falcons since the 1980s, so a supply of good falcons is never a problem: we keep a team of six to eight for crow hawking. Actually, six falcons are enough but one never knows when disaster may strike. One year, we had two falcons killed on their crows by cattle in two days. Mainly, we use peregrine/sakers or gyr/New Zealand falcons in the 900-1,000 gram range. The male gyr/New Zealand falcons have been good too, although a little small at 550 grams. The crows’ weights are in the 550-700 gram range. Of the gyr/peregrines, the females tend to be too big. We have had some good males but we have found them prone to start self-hunting if we don’t keep on top of them. We usually train about ten young falcons for other people every year, as well as our own.

We keep five or six hawking horses of our own and members bring their own horses. We mainly use Arabs or Anglo-Arabs; they are small enough to get on







to when carrying a falcon, are fast across country and can stay on their feet. My oldest horse, *Buckskin*, has hawked since he was three. This year we celebrated our joint centennial, he being thirty and myself seventy. We start the horses' fitness training in May, increasing the slow work until July, when they are ridden out more and more. We have a lot of hills in Wales for riding, and miles of sandy beaches.

The members have come and gone over the years. Some have died or got too old to ride but we have a lot of young ones too. Many are children of older members, some now with children of their own. Usually, we have about 20-25 members and, on an average hawking day, we have about six to 12 horses out. Early in the season, we have a members' dinner, hosted at the house of one of them, with everyone bringing a dish. Usually, they are the scene of much hilarity. In mid-August, we host a barbecue and dance at the mews for all our landowners. With the falcons all hooded on their perches and the lights of candles all around, we have live music with country dancing up and down the mews.

Each hawking day starts at 1pm. At some meets, the farmers hosting us provide home-cooked snacks and various beverages. At others, we meet at some isolated spot, unload the horses, take up one or two falcons and move off to the first draw. Unlike fox hunting, in which the followers play no active part, the crow hawking members all have to know their jobs. They may have to mark various coverts (small woods) or places where the flight may come down. They may have to gallop and stay with the falcon, either picking her up off the kill

or taking her down to the lure. All have walkie talkies so that they know what is happening, even if they are a mile or more away. By mid-afternoon, we stop for a tea break and all come together at the hawking van. We are fortunate in that several of our members are excellent cooks, so we are usually spoilt for cakes, sandwiches and sloe gin. One culinary pinnacle was smoked blackcock sausage rolls! Usually, we will hawk roughly in a circuit so that we finish back at the meet. If it is late and the last flight is some miles from the meet, we may send back some drivers in the hawking van and bring the lorries across to the horses.

Traditionally, rooks were hawked in spring while on passage to the rookery but we don't start until August. By then, the old falcons are clean moulted (having been on artificial lighting regimes) and the young ones are ready for entering. In Northumberland, the weather is a force to be reckoned with. Up on the hills, it can be very windy and the rain hits you like snipe shot. One year, the driver's door of the hawking van blew off. Once, at tea break, the rain kept filling up my tea mug faster than I could drink it. When we get some sunny days, though, all is forgiven. You can see for miles and miles across the most spectacular landscape. Far to the west are the glittering waters of the Solway Firth and the Cumbrian hills. To the north are the Scottish border hills, the setting for the historic raiding of cattle and horses. To the east, the land rolls down to the North Sea and to the south lie the patchy purple grouse moors. What better way to spend the day? We work as a team so there is no jealousy about whose falcon flies next. Some



members, because of youth or old age, may wish to be prudent and take it steady. Others, more hot blooded, race away to come unstuck in some bog or stream or else return triumphant, with a cropped-up falcon.

Training so many falcons, year after year, poses its own problems. Getting a young crow falcon started can be a tricky business, especially as we don't use bagged quarry. Not only is it illegal in the UK, it is not something I want to do. Yet, if you let a young falcon chase a crow, she may catch it some way off and get beaten up, before you can reach her, and then be put off crows for life. We tried all sorts of things: dead crows dragged behind horses or quad bikes, crows hung from kites and lines and flying the falcons in casts with older birds. None were very satisfactory and one still had the problem of getting the falcon properly fit. What I really needed was a robotic crow that would fly around the sky, doing what it was told and being caught by the falcon. So, we set to work to design one, first with Robert Musters and later with Remy Van Wijk. Now, seven years later, we have a model that can easily be controlled, flies nicely and can withstand multiple captures and crashes. It can be painted to become a herring gull, a pheasant, a grouse, a partridge, a mallard, a houbara, a stone curlew or even a goshawk or peregrine, for pest control. It's taken a lot of trial and error to develop (not to mention cost) but now we have a tool that can bring on the young falcon like no other.

We can teach it to recognise, and become 'wed' to, its chosen quarry. We can help it build confidence and strength by climbing 400 or more metres into the sky. It learns to stoop vertically and hit or bind to the head and to use the wind as an ally, not as an enemy. It learns to recover quickly and regain a position of strategic dominance. Every young falcon we have trained this way has either killed or put down the first wild crow she has been slipped at. We no longer have 'pacifists'. Any that are reluctant fliers are worked with, step by step, physically and mentally so that they develop a positive can-do attitude. Rejects are a thing of the past. Even rehab falcons, scarcely able to fly a level circle, have been built up, day by day, until they can punch through the clouds and stoop effortlessly.

It is good fun flying the rocrows. Everyday, we see super flights. Our old falcons, who for some years would break off a crow flight at 100 metres or so, would now fly on and up out of sight. They would take on slips at crows on passage that we would not have dared attempt before. Now, they hunt rocrows about three days a week, real crows on three days and they have one day off. We found, with this combination, that they reached peak fitness and kept it without going stale.

Meanwhile, in the Arabian Gulf, the falconers were also struggling with a lack of quarry. They had taken to running competitions, flying their falcons to the lure at 400 metres against the clock. Many came to us, wanting







to buy falcons for these races and, paradoxically, the ones they wanted were ones who naturally flew low. These were the falcons that we normally liked least. But I worried. If I bred falcons especially so that they would fly low, what would I do to the bloodlines? I could see how some dogs had been bred for show and were no longer any use for hunting. Some horses also were bred for show but were no use for real work. Would falcons go the same way? I wanted to maintain my bloodlines so that they were good for hunting, just like wild falcons. I saw a way for doing that using the roprey. After two months of training, I could have a young falcon flying so that she was indistinguishable from a haggard falcon. All those struggles we used to have over hacking became a thing of the past.

Thus, our next step was to develop a competition or hunt-race that tested all the attributes we expect to see in a wild-caught falcon. Using the roprey, we could, first of all, test her speed in the climb up to 120 metres. Then, we could evaluate her stoop; is she confident enough to do a clean, vertical teardrop stoop or does she need to spill air and take a shallower angle? Then, what is she like at close quarters; stooping, throwing up, turning quickly and putting pressure on her victim? Finally, could she take her prey neatly by the head or would she fluff around trying to grab its tail? After two years of trials with lots of falcons, we developed a competition that achieved what we wanted and was practicable for falconers and pilots. Then, we bought a farm called Vowley, not too far from London, and invited friends around for the first competitions. *Abu Dhabi Falconers' Club* kindly sponsored the prizes and the race card was full. Finally, we had an event that tested out the hunting falcons, provided a good day's sport and was humane and media friendly. For many people, this was the first time they saw what a gyrfalcon can actually do, when she pulls the stops out. We had stoops right over our

heads. The day after the event, we took our falcons back up to Northumberland and went hawking again with the same birds. This is what I wanted; to maintain the integrity of my hunting falcons.

Having enjoyed the event and having had many enthusiastic responses, we will expand it this year. With so many entries, we will have to hold qualifying heats over several days. It is a good way to get the young falcons going, before they are shipped out to the Arabian Gulf to race or hunt. For us, having experienced the frustrations of trying to fly large falcons in enclosed country with little quarry, it is fun to enjoy high flights, without all the worries. Will these races replace real falconry? I hope not. I will continue hunting with my falcons and horses in Northumberland, as long as age and health permit me. For me, this is what it is all about. But; I have to acknowledge that for most people, proper falconry remains a dream. Perhaps, at best, they can snatch a few weeks' grouse hawking. Then, it is back to the grind of work, family responsibilities and dark winter evenings closing in.

I'd like the *Northumberland Crow Falcons* to carry on after I have hung up my boots. It is not easy to find even paid falconers who can ride well, train falcons and have sufficient time and money to support it. Falconry has always relied on the goodwill of patrons, so I feel privileged to have enjoyed so many seasons. I hope that falconry will not be lost, but it is certainly hard to maintain. Maybe the young generation will be prepared to fight for it and make the necessary sacrifices.

## Notes

There is a book '*Classical Falconry*' and a film '*The Northumberland Crow Falcons*' available on: [www.falcons.co.uk/shop/products.asp?id=10](http://www.falcons.co.uk/shop/products.asp?id=10)  
Our closed Facebook group, 'Northumberland Crow Falcons', is run by Mary Ann Rogers: [info@marogers.com](mailto:info@marogers.com)







# *The Northumberland Crow Falcons: Hawking Log for August 3rd 2019*

*by Nick Fox, Master of NCF*



The Sewingshields Meet provides what must be one of the best hawking landscapes that Britain has to offer. The scenery is stunning and bejewelled with lakes and crags. It has some challenging ground but plenty of short old turf for good gallops too, and we can ride to the horizon all around. Today was on the hot side of warm, with some riders flinging off their outer garments with complete disregard for all ceremony. (Frankly; I don't know what the world is coming to!) We had fifteen horses out and a lot of car and foot followers and were in for a busy day.

We welcomed visiting riders: Verity Johnson, David Bryce and Bev Ridley from Cumbria. Then, we had Cherene and Leah Zard, Archie and Georgie Courage, Pippa, Flora and Derwy (looking dashing in leggings) and our own team with four horses. (Flora rode *Merlin* very well and even raced Jimmy). Mary Ann Rogers was out for the first time this season but had a disaster while heading up the rigg (ridge) for the third flight of the day, dislocating her shoulder. Alan and Mandy took her to A&E while Jim Lamb took her horse home for her. Later, to her great relief, she had her shoulder popped back in. We wish her a speedy recovery because she has really been through the wars. Kate Russell and

her friend, Jane Gould from Australia, managed to stay for the first few flights and a big party of Strakers had a look in from their barbecue at the lake. Jane and Jim Lamb arrived horseless, together with Alan and Mandy Nicholl from Hetherington.

We found crows in a hay field next to the meet and, so, it was a question of playing to the gallery by trying to get the flight to go where people could view it. One group of horses went round the barn on Townshield and some more skirted the hayfield, while we first went round the top side and cleared away some crows lounging to the south.

As we approached, the crows had lifted and started to climb away, heading for the trees, so we had no choice but to gallop "flat stick" to try to turn them and slip at the same time. *Stingray* climbed up well and Derwy, coming up from the Townshield side, didn't realise the flight was going on over his head. Then, they saw it and headed back towards the Townshield entrance. *Stingray* was up with the crows by this time and beat her crow in the air, stooped and bound to it, before it could reach the ground in the rough beyond the barn.





While Dan picked up *Stingray*, we gathered the troops and then we realised that a crow had stayed tight on the wall throughout the whole flight. Mary fetched *Flamenco* and we flushed the crow off. He soon realised that *Flamenco* was serious trouble and turned back for the wall but we were riding hard and he couldn't put in. She lassoed him and I had to swerve as they came down. a short flight so we saved *Flamenco* for another one later on.

We all moved away then, heading up the green riggs towards the Hotbank march (boundary) wall, where Mary Ann's horse had got frisky. We didn't realise until later on that she had had a spill. We found crows in an ideal spot on a bank ahead of us. With little wind to help them, the crows were in big trouble. *Fancy* fetched her crow before it could make a proper escape plan, turned it back and took it in the air after two or three turns. They came down in the rushes in the slack.

While this was going on, the riders to the north marked crows (probably the same ones) sulking in the small plantation. We surrounded it and Jimmy went in with *Herself*. We then had a rat hunt with three young ladies inside the wood whooping, loose horses cantering around and general mayhem. Several times, *Herself* turned her crow back in and ended up on the ground. In the end, despite our best efforts, the crow chose its moment and broke out high, unseen by the falcon. Can a crow look both relieved and smug all at once in flight?

We all headed out, up towards Hotbank and then north over the crags. Most of the horses then headed east, along the south side of the lake and Jimmy tried to

get a slip with *Herself* but got stopped at the large and boggy drain in that syke (small stream). Meanwhile, Mary and I went down the crag past the badger sett and stood in the stream for a while, letting the horses cool off and listening to the goings on over the radio. Then, we cut north onto the back fell, which extends to 900 acres and marked a big mob on the hayfields north of the lake. The main lot of horses came round and spread out to push them north, up the slope and away from the trees. I waited in ambush with *Stingray*, just to the side. Everything sort of went to plan. *Stingray* climbed well up to them and the horsemen raised a big din, as they came forward. The crows were determined to come back, high over their heads, holler as they might. But *Stingray* was up there too and split off about four crows to the north, where there was no cover at all. Soon, she had them beaten and, coming down fast, took one neatly on the way down. I'm not allowed to tell you this so don't read this bit, Mary. While *Stingray* dissected her crow, I threw one of the previously killed crows down, for Mary to pull a wing off, which she was determined to do unaided. Some of these big crows are tough, old birds. While Mary wrenched away with one foot on the crow, it gave a post-mortem croak, at which Mary leapt back with a very, girly squeal and I almost fell off laughing. Eventually, all was sorted and Mary walked to Stell Green feeding *Stingray* while I led *Salsa* to where everyone was having a picnic. Cherene very kindly led *Tonka* so that Molly from Australia could have a bit of a ride, while we demolished the last of Nellie's raspberry gin and toasted her in Australia.





After the picnic, some riders peeled off and we went hard core. Heading east towards Lonbrough, we marked some crows moving ahead but they were very flighty. We moved forward smartly and slipped *Flamenco* but it was a long shot for her and clearly they were heading away to glory. So, she turned and we quickly looked for more, while she waited on but all we could come up with was a family of kestrels who came out from the crag. *Flamenco* ignored one of the kestrels that mobbed her and we took her down.

Mary went back for *Fancy* and banged her hand at a ditch. I have broken the same bone before. Neck reining with your right hand, if the horse stops suddenly at a bad spot, your fingers get crushed against the horse's neck. No major harm done and she didn't mention it until afterwards. By the time she caught up with us, we'd skirted the lake and got up to the ridge on Townshield. We marked crows down on the green near the old stock trailer. Jimmy and Mary went quietly down the wall and slipped *Fancy*. She got into them and caused chaos. Then, at the last minute, she changed crows and came down in the rushes with it. We hacked back to the Stell Green track and changed hawks.

We still had *Himself* to fly and marked crows on the bank side up near the meet, west of the lime kilns. We crossed the ford and I slipped him at the crows as they lifted. He went in like an arrow and they were racing for the trees along the lake. We lost sight of him for a moment because he is so small and dark and, when I next saw him, he had a crow turned back

south towards a bracken covered rigg. He put it down hard, winged over and never came back up so Mary and the others raced down and got him. He's a very handy operator at about 550 grams, reminding me of *Spitty*.

We're very lucky to have such good ground, good weather, a good team of members and horses and old falcons who are fit and all know their trade. Keeping it all together is a balancing act but we must enjoy such days, while we can.







NICK FOX,  
OBE, BSc, CEd, PhD.

Nick Fox studied zoology at St Andrews University, Scotland and did his PhD on the biology of the New Zealand falcon at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. After lecturing in wildlife illustration for 11 years, he established an independent wildlife consultancy in 1989, which continues to this day.

Nick runs seven sheep and cattle farms in the United Kingdom. His wife Barbro and he established the *Bevis Trust* in Carmarthenshire, South Wales: a not for profit company that seeks to encourage the restoration of wildlife habitats within the context of productive farming.

Through his company, *International Wildlife Consultants*, he has directed research and conservation projects on raptors in Siberia, Mongolia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Mauritius, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Within the United Kingdom, he helped reintroduce the goshawk from 1972 to 1974, the red kite from 1986 to 1992 and is currently breeding beavers, aiming to restore their population. He has worked on saker and peregrine falcons since 1993. His work includes satellite tracking, migration studies, an artificial nest programme which produces 2,300 falcons per year and analysing the genomes of these species.

Nick was the first to breed the New Zealand falcon in captivity and has maintained a closed colony of these falcons for 40 years. He was one of the pioneers who domesticated falcons and has bred them for HM the Queen and the royal families of the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

He has also written two specialist books on falconry and another, *A Global Strategy for the Conservation of Houbara and Falcons*, relating to Arab falconry. He has contributed to many more books and published many scientific papers. He has produced fourteen films on falconry and appeared in several more.

The founder chairman of the *Falconry Heritage Trust*, he also wrote the initial submission on falconry to UNESCO. This was successful in 2010 when UNESCO inscribed falconry on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind, initially on behalf of 11 countries. He also founded the *International Festival of Falconry* and organised the 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2014 events.

Nick works intermittently on animal welfare issues and is a Scientific Advisor to the *All Party Parliamentary Middle Way Group* on hunting with dogs. He has published several papers and produced a film on the welfare aspects of killing and capturing wildlife and on the wounding rates in shooting foxes. After

30 years' service, he has now retired from *The Hawk Board*, which represents all the various falconry groups to the British government. He is a Vice-President of the *British Falconers' Club* and honorary member of the *New Zealand Falconers' Association* and various European clubs.

A falconer for 55 years, he still rides to hawks and has been Master of the *Northumberland Crow Falcons* for 28 years now. He was awarded the OBE by HM the Queen in 2014 for services to falconry and conservation of birds of prey.

He is the founder of *Wingbeat Ltd*, which designs and produces robotic birds that can be caught by falcons. This combines modern technology and sports science with ethology and traditional falconry. In 2019, he established *Vowley Racing*, a venue near Swindon in South West England, which hosts falcon training and racing events.

Nick's hobbies include designing saddles, hoods, houses and buildings, sailing, planting trees, digging ponds and lakes and restoring habitats. His current book is on the biological basis of moral mechanisms.



Photo credits Tim Wilson



# A FOUNDATION TO BUILD TO UPON

*by Hilary White, Ireland*

**The European Foundation for Falconry and Conservation signs historic raptor conservation agreement in Spain**

FROM a small lunch meeting in Abu Dhabi in 2017 to significant conservation action two and a half years later, the European Foundation for Falconry and Conservation (EFFC) has come of age in its goal to bring falconry values to Europe's future.

*An agreement signed in May between Fundación de Patrimonio Natural (an entity of the Regional Government of Junta de Castilla y León), leading Spanish healthcare company ASISA, and EFFC will launch 22 operations to remediate bird mortality caused by power lines in two areas of Ávila Province in Castilla y León, Spain.*

EFFC Chairman José Manuel Rodríguez-Villa said: "We are pleased to have reached this agreement with *Fundación Patrimonio Natural* and ASISA. The target is to remediate electrocutions in several power lines already identified in the province of Ávila. These actions have proven efficient at improving survival ratios in the concerned species, particularly large raptors. EFFC supports projects such as this wherever they are needed in the world."

La Moraña, an area covered in this agreement, has one of the highest rates for electrocutions because of the proliferation of private power lines that supply irrigation areas. These have a devastating effect on vulnerable species such as the Spanish imperial eagle (*Aquila adalberti*), red kite (*Milvus milvus*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and great bustard (*Otis tarda*). The other project concerns a 3km power line near the village

of Urraca Miguel. Here, electrocutions and collisions over the last number of years have involved different species, especially black vultures (*Aegypius monachus*) and griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*).

Regional Minister of Public Works and Environment of Castilla y León, Juan Carlos Suárez-Quíñones, said: "This first agreement will not only allow us to make an important number of actions in Ávila's province aimed at improving power facilities that are causing damage to avian fauna, it also leaves doors open to keep on increasing the collaborations between institutions."

ASISA President Dr Francisco Ivorra Miralles, meanwhile, added that the agreement chimed with ASISA's environmental commitments "not only within energy efficiency and emissions reduction, but also for the sake of species and biodiversity conservation".

Power lines kill thousands of raptors every year, the magnitude of the problem becoming apparent in recent years following extensive field work and research by falconers and biologists working in conjunction with the support of Emirates Falconers' Club and IAF. This initiative may be the first landmark project to be helmed by the newly formed EFFC, but it is the latest example of falconers spearheading the most pressing raptor conservation projects across the world.

*EFFC is a non-profit entity that channels European falconers' technical and financial resources into cultural and conservation projects. For more information, visit [www.ef-fc.org](http://www.ef-fc.org).*







# THE TRADITIONAL FALCONRY SHOW AT HAMARIKYU GARDEN IN TOKYO

*by Kazuyuki Kaneko*



The Hamarikyu Garden, located in the centre of Tokyo, was originally built by the 6th *Shogun*, Tokugawa Ienobu, in the early 17th century. It came to serve as part of the feudal lord's official Tokyo residence, and incorporated his duck hunting grounds during the *Edo* period (1603-1868).

Up until the *Edo* period, falconry was prohibited by a law known as *Shouruiawareminorei*. Implemented by the 5th *Shogun*, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi. This was considered a notorious law since it rigorously enforced extreme animal rights. However, the second boom of falconry started during this period, under the authority of the 6th *Shogun*, Tokugawa Ienobu (1646-1709).

Before this time, it seems that the site of the Hamarikyu Garden was used for various purposes – a villa, a teahouse, and an armoury. Furthermore, in the early 18th century, the 8th *Shogun*, Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684-1751) kept some Indian elephants there.

Yoshimune was very fond of falconry and was called the “hawk general”. He often put on parades in which hawks were carried.

During Yoshimune's reign, members of the general public were forced to live a simple life, while *Samurai* warriors lived and dressed very elegantly. It was at this time that the duck pond, called *Kamoike*, was made in the Hamarikyu Garden for the purpose of falconry.

The *Kamoike* is an artificial pond into which wild ducks are attracted by domesticated ducks, rather like the European duck decoys in which wildfowl was netted. Here the aim was to facilitate duck hawking with goshawks.

At that time, there were over 30 *Kamoike* ponds in the Tokyo area. This is because the concept of animal rights was so strong among the region's residents that they were not attracted to falconry, and so hawking wild duck in the field was not acceptable. However, killing wild game on private grounds was tolerated.

Today only a few *Kamoike* ponds are maintained under the Imperial Household's jurisdiction, around the Kanto area, in Saitama and Chiba. However, only the Hamarikyu Garden's *Kamoike* pond is open to the public.



During the *Edo* period, only the feudal lords could enjoy hawking. Following the *Edo* period, in the *Meiji* era when the time of the *Samurai* warriors was over, falconry was being practiced by dukes.

Up until this time, civilians other than *Samurai* warriors were not allowed to keep hawks. The *Meiji* period was historically important and transformational. This was when civilians were first allowed to engage in falconry.

The Hamarikyu Garden was also under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Family. There were several falconry schools from the mid-19th to the early 20th century because falconry techniques were slightly different under each feudal lord. After World War II, all of the falconry schools disappeared with the exception of two. Both of these two schools were made accessible to the private sector, and the Hamarikyu Garden was opened to the public as a park. Currently, the traditional falconry show is being performed there. However, this is very different from the hawking carried out in the Hamarikyu Garden during the *Meiji* to *Showa* periods. The traditional falconry show you can watch here today represents the ancient style of Japanese falconry as practiced by the 11th *Shogun*, Tokugawa Ienari (1773-1841) during the *Edo* period. To make it more authentic, the traditional falconry cabin and hawking teahouse have been rebuilt there.

In 2019, the traditional falconry show, with falconers wearing *Edo* period falconers' clothes, was started by Japan Falconry Preservation Association. This consisted of three falconry organisations – the WFC, led by the Japanese IAF representative Yukihiro Fujita, the NFC and *Stooper*, represented by Kazuya Ishikawa.

On the opening day, over 20 falconers gathered, wearing traditional costumes and carrying goshawks and peregrine falcons on their gloves, to parade around the inside of the Hamarikyu Garden. It was a lovely sunny day and thousands of tourists gathered in front of the hawks on their perches.







### Modern falconry in Japan

As previously mentioned, the traditional Japanese falconry which flourished under the *Shoguns'* families was over in the 18th century, and all the falconers that served under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Household retired. After this, civilian falconers began to increase, learning the methods of falconry from retired falconers.

In the northern part of Japan, people subsisted by engaging in agriculture during the summer and by hunting wild game in the winter. The people of these northern agricultural regions began to use mountain

hawk eagles for hawking. Gradually the use of these birds increased in the villages.

In the city areas, people practiced falconry as a hobby, primarily using goshawks to hawk wild duck, pheasant and bamboo partridge. With an ancient history of hawking with goshawks, Japan was unfamiliar with the use of peregrines for hawking, as compared to their longstanding use in western countries. However, in the last decades Yukihiro Fujita has learned high flying techniques abroad and introduced them into Japanese falconry, as a result of which the standard of flying longwings was raised to a higher level.

Today's Japanese falconry can be classified into two groups: the traditional style from the *Edo* period and the more modern style that incorporates techniques from overseas.

In traditional falconry, the falconer must walk very quietly to approach wild ducks or other game birds from behind cover. It's as if he is talking to nature, hunting like a *Samurai* warrior. However, recent years have seen it becoming increasingly difficult to find suitable hunting ground to maintain this traditional style of hawking.

Modern hawking in Japan is still based on traditional Japanese methods but is, increasingly, influenced by overseas techniques. Nowadays there are often lively hawking parties that use teamwork to practice their sport successfully.

In both traditional and modern Japanese falconry, we hunt the same quarry species as wild duck and pheasant. In recent times, hunting grounds have decreased rapidly. Riversides and ponds are fenced for safety, embankments reinforced with concrete and open land has become private property, and so out of bounds.





Whilst traditional quarry species have declined in number, populations of birds harmful to agriculture and public health, such as crows and starlings, have greatly increased. Nowadays falconers have the chance to engage in pest control on public land or industrial areas.

In many ways, the purpose of falconry, and our ability to practice it, has changed with time. While traditional falconry methods have decreased over the years, including the use of handmade gloves and feeding baskets, and the use of lures has replaced live bait, we must preserve our traditions and keep our cultural falconry history alive, for future generations.

Japan's cultural history of falconry includes traditional methods like – *Awase*, *Hogoshi*, *Kaeshi* and

*Seriage*, etc. Such methods are peculiar to the ancient Japanese style of falconry. These methods are a beautiful form of Japanese art. Falconers always reflect upon this, as if they are showing their hunting to their *Tonosama* – their feudal lord. As can be seen on the traditional Japanese picture scrolls from the *Edo* period, classic visual representations of our past heritage. Ancient falconers used those peculiar styles and methods for both peregrines and goshawks. Nowadays we try to do the same in our modern falconry.

Japan welcomes all falconers. If you have a chance to visit our nation, you can enjoy watching our traditional falconry in a small field, and share our unique cultural heritage.



KAZUYUKI  
KANEKO

Founder of NFC, the Nippon Falconers' Club, after initial footsteps in the sport aged 11, keeping a sparrowhawk, he learned falconry directly from Mr. Kaoru Hanami, who was a former official falconer serving the Emperor of Japan. Kazuyuki is a modern, forward-looking, falconer yet one who belongs to the lineage of the Suwa school that has continued for more than 1,000 years. He is especially skilled with goshawks and small raptors, teaching his methods of falconry to the NFC's members. He is also active as a volunteer in the rehabilitation of sick and injured birds in Saitama prefecture, about 30 km from Tokyo.





# *Red Grouse Hawking in Scotland or the Art of Perfection.*

*by Patrick Morel*

Pinnacle of the falconer's skill and nature's beauty, red grouse hawking is far more than just hunting with a falcon waiting on high above one's head and a dog on point in the heather. Falconry is defined as the art of hunting wild quarry in its natural environment with a trained hawk. The Art can take many forms, but there is one that has remained aesthetically consistent for centuries. Scotland's bleak moorland is one of the most inviting landscapes for game hawking. The sobriety of the landscape, its variety of colours and its infinite dimensions are of sublime beauty.

Red grouse hawking enjoys a special place in our sport. Generally considered one of the most difficult quarries, grouse are strong, fast birds. Living in wild country, where the weather tends to be equally wild, they fly long distances when flushed and seldom put in within view.

It's hard to explain the rush one experiences witnessing a falcon plummeting from the heavens at over 300km/h to slam into a fleeing grouse. Having enjoyed this spectacle hundreds of times, I am still stunned by one of the most thrilling spectacles Mother Nature can provide in the wild outdoors.



The flight at grouse seems to me the epitome of classical falconry as, to avoid failure, everything must be perfect: a very good, reliable, dog and a superior falcon. If everyone behaves accordingly, it is a perfect triangular relationship between the falconer, the dog and the falcon.

### The quarry

The red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus scotica*) is a medium-sized bird of the grouse family found on Great Britain and Ireland's heather moors. Grouse subsist almost entirely on, roost and nest in heather, each activity requiring heather at different stages in the plant's lifecycle. Sustainable grouse numbers for sport are maintained primarily through a combination of heather and predator management. To achieve structural diversity in the heather, patches are burnt regularly to create a patchwork of young, medium and old growth that provides the right combination of nutrition and cover. Heather beetle can be a particular problem on damper grouse moors. The beetle's main predator is a tiny parasitic wasp, so beetle outbreaks







Photo credits Leopold Amory

tend to be cyclical as a result. Grazing by sheep and deer also needs a careful balance to limit the spread of grasses and protect the heather. On top of all this, grouse populations maintained at high density can suffer disease cycles, with the strongyle gut nematode and louping ill from ticks being major constrainers of population health.

### Decline of grouse populations

The causes of decline appear to be multifactorial. Britain lost 30% of its heather between 1950 and 1980, largely due to overgrazing and afforestation. The heather uplands also probably face a fairly bleak longer-term future being a habitat especially vulnerable to climate change. However, while heather loss is important, it cannot account for the full extent of the decline in grouse stocks.

Numbers have drastically declined in recent years: birds are now absent in areas where they were once common. The last three years were very bad for grouse breeding, probably due to climatic conditions, and all driven shoots were cancelled in our part of the

Highlands. Hawking is permitted, but with a daily bag limit, and has been seriously affected by low grouse numbers and an absence of young birds. This means finding only old grouse, in pairs or singly, which are much harder to fly. With low grouse densities, we had no other option than adapting our falconry and realising that only high pitches make possible the glories of classical game-hawking.

Assuming accounts of flights to be more amusing than drier details of training my hawks, I am induced to describe a flight at what I consider the finest of game birds. A most sporting bird, the red grouse is endowed with strength, wildness, great speed, curling lines of flight and endurance.

### *Highlands, September 2019*

*On this mid-September day, the weather is pretty cold and the wind blows in gales at about 40mph. Our small group walks slowly across the purple hills. The pointer is running hard down the valley, flying over the heather which, in its flowering season, is adorned with an elegant shade of violet. Ibra, a seasoned English pointer, runs back and forth against the wind in search of the dream quarry. When Ibra acknowledges a firm scent, he suddenly freezes on point.*

*It's my turn to fly; I take Apollo, a once intermewed peregrine tiercel, off the cadge. Departing somewhat from the group, I unhood the falcon. In a glance, Apollo has seen the dog's point and analysed the landscape; he rouses on the fist, stretched skyward, then a little impetus puts him on the wing. Immediately, as he habitually does, Apollo flies in a straight line to the dog and passes low over the*

point. Having thus seen the falcon the grouse have all flattened on the ground, invisible in the heather. Apollo seeks wind and starts climbing in wide circles. The wind is strong but he knows how to tackle it, using the slope wind hitting the hill to get higher and higher. We don't move and let Apollo make his careers and gain pitch. In a couple of minutes, he is already a speck in the sky.

Ibra will not break his point and flush the grouse on his own: he will only do so on command. Only his eyes move, following the falcon that is climbing up and circling over him. The grouse have spotted the little flickering dot flying in circles high in the sky. They know that danger comes from above, having been hawked for over 30 years and, indeed, longer: Colonel Thomas Thornton flew over this moor a decade before the Napoleonic era. Beside this, they encounter wild peregrines and eagles daily and experience has taught them to stay put until the threat goes. Now, however, the threat is increasing as there is a man closing in.

I start walking slowly across the moor, getting closer to the dog. Contrary to most falconers' practice, with experienced hawks I don't walk widely around the point in front of the dog and then return towards it to flush downwind as I estimate that the falcon has to be in the right position: upwind and far in front of me in a commanding position. After a few wider turns, Apollo is now describing shorter circles, climbing over the dog and flying into the wind. At some point, he reaches his highest pitch and starts cruising into the wind a few hundred metres in front of the dog, making 'figure of eight' slides like a sailboat.

Sensing that the relative positions of all actors in this drama (including the wind) are optimal, I command the dog to flush: "get them up!" Ibra jumps and runs forward – a covey of rust-brown birds bursts from the heather. Apollo reacts immediately, starting his strike in a teardrop, almost vertical, stoop, pinions pressed to his body. The flickering dot ceases to flicker, and appears even smaller, becoming a tiny ball that falls and falls through the sky towards us. With his wings folded like the blades of an arrowhead, the peregrine, built for this purpose by centuries of evolution, rends the air with a thrilling sound and, in seconds, closes with the covey escaping in all directions. Apollo has selected his grouse and strikes it with the full speed of his stoop. The grouse is blown out of the air in an explosion of feathers, hitting the ground hard and bouncing back up before dropping onto the heather, dead.



Photo credits Leopold Amory



Since commencing hawking in Caithness in 1971, I have adapted my methods – indeed my ethos – to more mountainous terrain. The mountain moors of the Grampian Highlands are quite different to Caithness’ flat moors. As the better managed Highland moors hold higher densities than Caithness, grouse are often shot in driven shoots and hawking is not always welcome, though some estates manage to find a compromise that allows co-existence with falconers.

### **‘Lift’ moors: advantages and disadvantages**

Moors where hillsides run at right-angles to the prevailing winds are called ‘lift’ moors. Whatever the wind strength (provided it blows from the right direction), they allow the falcon to use the updraught over a wind-facing slope to soar effortlessly above a hawking-party working near the foot of the slope.

Flying in hilly country is an entirely different form of falconry as, although the wind can be an advantage if flying on uphill slopes, it may prove disadvantageous if flying downhill or on a leeward slope, meaning that a lot of land is ‘unflyable’. That said, once falcons know how to use slope winds, they can excel in such conditions and have much longer flights than in any other place. It’s quite common to have flights lasting over half an hour.



Photo credits Raph Courjaret

As to mountain hawking’s other disadvantages, it must be said that low cloud has the same effects as fog, precluding flying some days. A newer problem is the presence of nesting golden eagles posing a serious threat: my friend and I lost seven falcons to the eagles over the last 25 years!

### **Pitch – the height of success**

For falconers, pitch has always been, and will ever be, a topic of lively conversation and some exaggeration. All accept, however, that the higher a falcon flies, the more spectacular she looks and the finer the ensuing



Photo credits Patrick Morel

stoop. Indeed, high pitch is the essential ingredient of advanced waiting-on flights.

### High fliers

To quote Michell<sup>1</sup> ‘*The glory of a falconer who goes in for game-hawking is “a falcon towering in her pride of place”; and her “place” is some hundreds of yards above her master’s head. A high pitch is the beauty of a game-hawk. The best game-hawks go up until they look quite small in the sky. A thousand feet is often attained. When a peregrine is as high as this, it matters comparatively little whereabouts the game gets up . . .*

*It is with grouse and black-game, more than with any other quarry, that you see at once when they get up the immense advantage of a high pitch. When the falcon is some hundreds of feet high she commands a wide area below.*

*No one knows how the speed and force of a falcon’s stoop are gained. All we can say is that it is the fastest movement made by any living thing in the world. It is not flying, and it is not falling, but a combination of the two, with some other impulse which we do not understand. But weight is only one factor in the agglomeration of influences which make the stoop of the peregrine so swift. It must be seen to be believed in.’*

### Conclusion

Falconry is, above all, a celebration of nature. For a falconer to shape his hawk into an exceptional high-flying game hawk, he needs real game. Wild game is the guarantee of providing challenging flights that will upskill the falcon.

Falconry is far more than just hunting. For most true falconers, it has evolved from a sport to an art in that the bag is nearly irrelevant as a determinant of success. Their best flights are often those where the grouse escape, teaching themselves and the falcon to a greater level.

To witness, amid such picturesque surroundings, the admirable way in which dogs and hawks will work in concert, each perfectly understanding the other, is a sight not easily forgotten. After watching a good flight over a great point, I have often heard spectators telling me that falconry is easy. It is indeed. However, there is more to be savoured in trying to understand such a passionate man when his falcon is up there.

<sup>1</sup> E.B. Michell, *The Art and Practice of Hawking*, Methuen & Co, London, 1900.



Understand how much he has sacrificed for this brief moment of grace, looking up and flirting with the sky, ‘flying’ in all senses of the word with his falcon gliding on the wind.

In fact, so much knowledge, skill and experience are required to bring about a good flight that the spectators will mostly only ever appreciate the end result.

Perfection is finding the perfect match in a quarry for an ever-learning falcon . . . and falconer. Falconers are artists having developed an exceptional eye for beauty. Only a few are capable of training a high-flying falcon to regularly capture grouse in flight over an outstanding pointing-dog, and only a very few falconers have the confidence to turn it into an art: the art of perfection.



PATRICK MOREL

In 1971, Patrick Morel and his friend Gilles Nortier went to Scotland for red grouse hawking, which has long occupied a special place in our sport. Seduced by stunning landscapes and truly wild quarry, allowing the most spectacular classical gamehawking over pointing-dogs, this became an annual pilgrimage that continues every year.

After beginning in the mountains of Glencoe, they leased a moor further north in Caithness, the traditional grouse hawking region. When Caithness’ grouse densities started dropping, they moved south to the Grampian Highlands where, this year, Patrick hopes to celebrate his 50th red grouse hawking season.

Movie on red grouse hawking:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emIJHO tKQE>





# The 2019-20 Falconry Season in Aguascalientes, Mexico

by Martin Guzman Lasagabaster

The rainy season in Mexico lasts about four months each year. The amount of rain we get over this period determines how many ducks will hibernate here. In 2019, we started our falconry season in July, right at the peak of the wet season. The small ponds, where I like to hunt with my falcons, fill with water that has drained through the surrounding tilled lands. The water carries with it many kinds of seeds and grains; food for the ducks and for a large variety of other wild birds. We see fourteen different species of duck in this region, so we start each hawking season with great expectations.

*Pia* and *Lucy*, my two *anatum* female peregrines, have flown over this same terrain every season for eleven years now. They were hatched in this area and captured here too, after they had fledged and learned to hunt for themselves. They know and really dominate the area and, depending on the pond where they are being flown, I believe that they can even anticipate how the ducks will fly. When the ducks are flushed, the falcons



Location of Aguascalientes on the map of Mexico

already seem to know where they will fly to and even where they like to take refuge.

After having flown falcons for 44 years, I feel very fortunate that I can enjoy the best bird I have ever had – *Lucy*. She never fails to impress me. She has a distinctive way of flying; she climbs effortlessly to great height and loses herself in the sky. I can let her fly without concern, since she never loses sight of me and the dogs. She also takes her time with each flight,



Photo credits Elena Gutierrez

which can be anything between 10 and 30 minutes, but she always knows when to start the hunt.

Once the dogs are sent to the pond to flush the ducks, she decides which technique she will use to attack. I like to flush the ducks when she is far away, in a position that appears less than ideal. The ducks go on the wing and gain altitude confidently, searching for another pond to find refuge in. Under these circumstances, the most spectacular flights occur.

The ducks usually fly high and far away from the water. *Lucy* starts the stoop from a height of 500 - 800m, driving down hard all the way, almost to the ground. She then levels out and draws rapidly up to the flock, approaching them from their blind spot, behind and below. She hits her prey by surprise with such an impact and power that the bird often continues its trajectory, immobilized and often already dead. *Lucy* then grabs and binds to the duck in mid-air, bringing her quarry to the ground. It all seems to happen in an instant. It surprises me every time again how, while in the air, she can approach, hit, kill and bind to her prey in a few seconds.

*Lucy* has a great character. On the one hand she is tame and docile, on the other I have never seen a falcon with such control in the air, with so many skilled ways of hunting. She rarely misses a strike. One of the more memorable days of the season was a month ago; It was not very cold and the sky was clouded, which I like as it makes it easier for me to see the falcon from a great distance.

I set her loose and she started her flight as usual, gradually mounting to a great height. The pond was just 100m. away and full of duck, which included



twelve northern pintails (*Anas acuta*), which are my overall preferred prey for hawking. They are particularly beautiful but, more than anything else, they are very sharp-witted. They know how to avoid danger and, usually will not take to flight until all other ducks present have left. They wait until the falcon has attacked and has struck one of the fleeing ducks, before choosing their moment to escape.

When *Lucy* was 650m high and 1.5 km away, she began her return. The dogs and I had flushed the ducks from the water. *Lucy's* descent from that height and distance was blisteringly fast, producing an incredible ripping sound as she powered down towards the group of ducks that were busy gaining altitude and distance. Luckily enough, I was able to watch it clearly with my binoculars. Approximately 300m away from me, she hit a duck hard and, followed by a steep turn, descended







captures around 150 ducks each season. I keep a record of the more memorable flights of the season and compare them with those of earlier years.

quickly for the final kill. After I had reached her, I was surprised to find that she had killed a pintail duck which carried a ring. Afterwards, I wrote an email to the Canadian Wildlife Service, passing on the ring information.

Each of my two falcons have a different and distinctive way of flying and hunting. The fastest stoop I have ever registered with my Marshall telemetry equipment this season was with *Pia*. She came down from a height of 1,267m at a speed of 284 km/h (176 mph) and captured a blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*) just meters away from the pond into which it was trying to escape. *Pia* is also an amazing falcon; she has a more aggressive temperament than *Lucy* but she stuns me equally with unfaltering ability.

My flying season lasts approximately nine months, starting in July and ending in March. Each falcon



MARTIN  
GUZMAN  
LASAGABASTER

Born in Mexico City in 1963, I obtained my first hawk – a red-tailed hawk – at the age of twelve. Impassioned, I bought a book that really helped me to learn the basics of the art of falconry. Fortyfour years later, I still have the same passion of those early days. Ever since, I have been lucky enough to always have had a hawk to fly. At the beginning, the results were not satisfactory and I could not figure out why. It took years and considerable effort, by trial and error, training all kinds of hawks, to understand the dynamics of falconry and how to hunt successfully with these magnificent birds.

Moving away in 1988 from chaotic Mexico City, where flying falcons was far from straightforward, I came to live in Aguascalientes. Here, I captured my first passage anatum peregrine and started hunting ducks with her. Ever since, I have enjoyed incredible hawking with these amazing, beautiful birds. During the hawking season (July to March), weather permitting, I usually take around 300 ducks with my two high-flying falcons.







# Hawking Trip to Scotland (2019)

by Arnoud Heijke and Willem Windau

## Introduction

Since 2017, my nephew and hawking partner Willem and I have spent a week each year in the eastern Scottish Borders. Our reason for this is that the UK offers possibilities for hunting in general, and for hawking in particular, that are particularly favourable compared to those in our busy and overcrowded Netherlands. Falconry requires a rich small game situation, which certainly exists in the region where we reside and hawk. In addition, legislation allows better opportunities for visiting falconers from the Netherlands. We hope that you will enjoy our report.

The approaching Brexit had cast some uncertainty over regulations regarding the transport of hawks to and from the UK. We had therefore decided to book the last full week before the scheduled Brexit date of 30 October 2019. This would allow us to board the ferry based on CITES documentation plus veterinary health clearance. Better safe than sorry. Fearing that this could well prove to be the last opportunity to hunt with our own hawks in Scotland, we were highly motivated to go. With the UK leaving the EU we might be faced with a substantially longer journey (there are designated CITES ports hundreds of miles further to the south) in the future and possibly new paperwork might take more time, and be more expensive, to the extent that one week's hawking would in fact become unfeasible for us.

We also chose a week in October because of better weather conditions, as the forecast for that period was significantly better than for November in terms of wind and rain. After the moult, there would still be enough time to train and fly the hawks in preparation for this week. Another consideration was that our host would be free and could join us for the whole week.

We have been staying with Ian and Beverly since 2017 and they and their family are now good friends of ours. We rent self-catering accommodation from them, but often stay with them in their home. Our hostess is an excellent cook and throughout the week takes care of our breakfast, lunch for the field and dinner. The evenings are spent enjoying the food, having good conversation and a few glasses of wine together.

Through personal contacts with landowners and friendly gamekeepers, our host had made all the arrangements for our week of hawking; a wonderful mixture of farmland and coastal rock cliffs followed by a few days on a grouse moor, each offering hawking opportunities to take rabbit, pheasant, partridge, woodcock, brown hare and even the mystical mountain hare! The latter, which we call *sneeuwhaas* (snow hare) in Dutch, is number one on our bucket list.

## Our hawks

Having taken female goshawks in previous years, Arnoud decided to take his tiercel red-tailed hawk, *Massimo*, this

Willem  
focused on  
the warren





Day one, Willem, Ian,  
Calum and Arnoud

year. *Massimo* is 17 years old and has spent most of his years in a breeding aviary. His weight was reduced a few times in recent years after which he showed such good hawking potential that Arnoud decided to take him with him. This gave him the opportunity to hawk with his bird to the full; after all, in the Netherlands red-tails are not classified as an authorised hunting species, while they are in the UK. *Massimo* hunts at a weight of just under a kilo (1,000g) and when called to the fist reacts instantly. He is equipped with a unique tail bell fastening system, by which the bell hangs under the tail whilst the transmitter lays flat on top of it. Consequently, his feet are completely free, because he doesn't wear a ring either. *Massimo* was drawn from the aviary in mid-August at a weight of 1,287g. Training consisted of recall flights on a heavy cord, and about half an hour of following-on each day for the last three weeks. At home he is placed on a swing-perch in the garden almost daily, which he likes very much. As a result, he was particularly fit. A week before departure, there was an opportunity to hawk with him, when he successfully took rabbit.

Rabbiting  
the dales

Willem had decided to give his youngest goshawk, *Lucy*, a chance this year. *Lucy* is an Austrian bred *buteoides* x European hawk and is three years old. Because Willem has two goshawks, he must alternate and, as his other goshawk had preference during the last two seasons, *Lucy's* previous seasons were short. *Lucy* weighs 1,065g and has successfully hunted brown hare in Scotland in 2017. She is a true fur specialist and has more than excellent recall to both fist and lure. She wears a Marshall backpack harness and hunts with a leg bell. Four weeks before departure, *Lucy's* fitness training began. She was flown on a heavy cord daily so was exceptionally fit travelling to Scotland and, like *Massimo*, had successfully hunted rabbit prior to the trip.

We both placed most emphasis on getting our hawks in peak fitness and building a good bond rather than, initially, on hawking. The wind is always a factor in Scotland and the differences in altitude require hawks to be in exceptionally good condition: only then can they reach their full potential. The decision to give extra training, those extra recall workouts, in our view made all the difference during the week in Scotland.

Because both birds have a strong focus on furred game, the days were planned in such a way that rabbit, in conjunction with brown or mountain hare, could always be hunted, although the fields where we hawked were also teeming with game birds.

### Other preparations

Health certificates were issued by veterinarians a few days before departure. The hawks' transport boxes







Lucy on rabbit

were cleaned, whilst a specially modified plastic box, with gazing top and a 'poop compartment', was made in order for our ferrets. Dry feed was brought as well. Telemetry was checked, as were the ferret finder, spare batteries and all the other precise electronic stuff. Whole racing pigeons were vacuum packed and similar packets of chicks, rabbit and quail were made. It makes transport easier and saves cleaning at our destination. We even took the vacuum machine along for bringing back home cleaned, vacuumed and frozen game taken by our hawks.

### The journey

On Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October, Arnoud joined Willem in Drunen. Willem had quite recently bought an extended VW Amarok, which meant that this year we would have the ultimate travel car at our disposal with significantly more space for the hawks, ferrets and our gear. In the late afternoon we left for Rotterdam Europort for the crossing to Kingston-upon-Hull.

The customs check in the Netherlands went without problem: we only had to show the health certificates and the hawks were briefly inspected. After a pleasant crossing we arrived in Hull at 09:00, followed by a nice journey of almost five hours through fine English and Scottish scenery, before arriving at Ian and Beverley's where we were given a warm welcome. How nice it was to see them again!

This year we had accommodation for six people at our disposal, with three bedrooms, a living room and kitchen. The hawks had travelled well and were placed

on their perches on the lawn to weather and bathe. In order not to give foxes a chance, we always place the birds in their boxes at night. During the day, close attention was paid to wild peregrines, which can be found on the coast. The ferrets (a small female, *Juultje*, and a large polecat colour male, *Booff*) were given a place in the shed.

Once settled, we quickly went to Ian and Beverly's house for a good cup of coffee. The large open kitchen is always comfortable and cosy and the presence of their three Labradors and five cocker spaniels always makes it special. A litter of cockers added to a wonderful atmosphere. We had a delicious meal followed by extensive chatting.

### The hawking days

All in all, we were able to hawk together during five whole days. Each day we were successful and in total we took twenty rabbits and six mountain hares with our hawks. The following short excerpts describe some of our flights:

**Excerpt 1** *'Immediately after we let our ferret enter, a large rabbit jumps out of a hole on the top of the hill and already Lucy is on her way! The rabbit runs down the*

The first  
mountain  
hare!







Another rabbit for the red-tailed hawk

the head with his other foot. Rolling together a few metres, they eventually come to rest poised perfectly on the edge of a rock. Rabbit taken!

**Excerpt 2** 'On to a sloping area with several rabbit warrens. The first rabbit bolts immediately, running nicely down the hill towards a large warren, tens of metres away. Massimo starts aggressively, but in the end doesn't go for the kill, which means that the rabbit manages to go to ground. The next warren is given our ferrets' attention. After five minutes, a fine rabbit darts out and tries to flee over the stony ground, jumping from rock to rock. During such a leap, Lucy manages to hit the rabbit full on the head in mid-air! All three of us are perplexed by the gos' action: how **did** she do that? So fast and so sure! We savour the situation. Five out of six. This is fun.'

**Excerpt 3** 'As it is close to noon, we drive on to the hunting cabin for our lunch. After unpacking our lunch bags, it turns out that Beverly has showed off her best side again: perfect sandwiches, homemade cake, fruit, coffee and a can of beer. Gamekeeper John joins our group and asks about the day's events. He tells us that there are plenty of rabbits on the rolling slopes above the hut and that there is even a good chance of finding mountain hare. After lunch, we take John's advice to heart and walk to the spot indicated. On the first hill we find a nice level area with young heather, a perfect place for mountain hare! As we walk, lined out, across the heather, a mountain hare gets up right in front of Arnoud's foot. A shout reverberates over the hill: "HAAAAAS!" Massimo is already on his way and needs less than ten metres. Viciously, the red-tail hits the hare clean in the head and it goes down instantly. Arnoud destroys the world record for ten metres and captures the hare.

**Excerpt 4** 'It's a special moment: our very first mountain hare is in the bag. In recent months everything has been all about this moment and now, with our first real chance, we have immediate success. This beautiful moment evokes strong emotions. Arnoud decides to feed

barren hill and reaches the slightly taller grass. Because she is flying downhill, the goshawk manages to make good speed and quickly bridges the distance. She succeeds in positioning herself well and grabs the rabbit by the head, after which a brief struggle follows. After a few seconds Lucy manages to hold the rabbit pressed against the grass. Thereafter, the rabbit is despatched and the gos is given the chance to feed off it.

Whilst Lucy is feeding, a second bunny bursts from the burrow. Both of us can see how it deftly moves through the grass and then runs over the rocks down the hill. Massimo is released and, cleverly using gravity, lands near the rabbit after a very long flight. Just as his quarry is about to reach a warren, Massimo hits it on the back. The rabbit twists through a quarter-turn, after which Massimo takes it by

Ian with  
the cockers







Willem's first mountain hare

*she drops down in the dense ferns like a brick. The sound of a screaming rabbit reverberates through the valley and we know that Lucy has successfully closed the day.'*

**Excerpt 6** *'After a 15-minute drive, we park our trucks in the heather. John shows us where he expects the hares to be, and indicates that we should be alert from the first moment. He wishes us every success and goes back to work. Ian takes care of the cockers and we start walking in line, Arnoud on the left, Ian with the two cockers on the right and Willem in the middle. After fifty metres, the first hare – a big heavy buck – gets up for Willem. It doesn't get far. Lucy starts eagerly and quickly manages to make contact with the hare, resulting in a brawl, since she hasn't managed to take the hare by the head. Willem runs towards the fighting animals but, just as he is about to grab the hare, it breaks loose and manages to escape. Willem drops to his knees, not knowing which way to turn. What a disappointment; so close!*

*However, the goshawk looks good and her head indicates a stormy mood, so that's no problem! Shortly thereafter, one of the cockers puts up a hare about thirty meters to the right of Willem. Ian shouts and Lucy is slipped, pumping powerfully in pursuit to close the gap with the hare as it flees uphill. We see the hare disappear behind the first hill with Lucy some ten metres behind it. Just when we think the hawk is about to give up, we see Ian standing with clenched fists in the air. "SHE GOT*

*up Massimo on the warm meat, thereby giving the hawk his ultimate reward. While the bird is feeding, all three of us stand watching with blissful feelings and big smiles, enjoying the experience.*

*We inspect the hare. It's nowhere near as big as the hare we saw earlier today. In fact, in terms of physique, it is more rabbit-like, even in terms of fur, though with the typical feet and longer ears that are unmistakably those of a hare. The mountain hares are now in the transitional phase from their brown summer coat to their snow-white winter coat. Some, like the hare we took, are still predominantly brown, while a few are clearly beginning to develop a lighter colour, making them look grey-blue. For this reason they are sometimes also called blue hares.'*

**Excerpt 5** *'We then descend into the valley. Willem walks the last part halfway up a hill, which is overgrown with abundant royal ferns, to gain sufficient height to slip at anything that might flush. Many traces of rabbits are visible among the ferns and, soon enough, the first breaks cover. Lucy launches immediately but gets stuck in the cover. Twenty metres further on, another rabbit goes on the run: the hawk goes for it, but soon loses it. After a high turn, she dives back into the ferns but, unfortunately, no luck. A few metres further on, exactly the same story and again no success, but what a wonderful sport. All three of us enjoy the spectacle hoping that eventually we will take quarry in this way.*

*That is the case in the next flight when a nice rabbit emerges from the ferns thinking that it can escape.*

*Lucy immediately makes height and then slightly floats in the wind. She dives downwards, but after a few metres she decides to fly further and regains height, after which*



Raptor!





The lower  
part of the  
grouse  
moor

*HIM!!” Willem has some 100 metres to cover, running over the tough, woody, multi-year-old heather as fast as he can, before he reaches his bird. This time the hawk has the hare well in her grip and sits on her defeated prey. She too has achieved her goal. What a flight, what perseverance! With the same smile as on the previous day after having captured the first hare, the three of us stand looking at the gos. This is moreish!’*

**Excerpt 7** *‘Then we continue, Arnoud on the left, Ian on the right and Willem in the middle. The next chance would be for Lucy, or at least that’s what we thought! Narrowly to the left of Arnoud a very light hare appears and Massimo has already left! A long flight of about 100 metres, right against the wind, follows and, missing twice, twice Massimo gets up and tries again. He definitely goes for it but is just not decisive enough and the hare manages to escape. What a strong flight this was and what a pleasure to watch. One of the reasons why we love this kind of hawking!’*

### Epilogue

On Friday morning, we took care of our hawks as they enjoyed a shining sun, sat on the grass. We butchered the hares (six in total), vacuum packing the back fillets and quarters to go into the freezer. Finally, we cleaned the house, before heading to Edinburgh with Beverly

and Ian to fully enjoy this beautiful city. The return journey, crossing and customs went smoothly, and the hawks and everything else arrived safely home without any problems.

Looking back on a very successful week, we hunted two very strong, but very different, hawks in a fantastic environment. Each time we go hawking in Scotland, we acquire new skills, and can’t wish for a better school for our development as individual falconers. One major setback of the week was being unable to deploy dogs. Although we were surrounded by working cockers every night, we were unable to use them during the day, except for a few hours, because the red-tail does not tolerate them. We would undoubtedly have had significantly more opportunities on rabbit and most certainly on mountain hare. Hawking without a dog is incomplete.

We enjoyed the friendship encountered, the flights and the wonderful scenery, and are grateful for everything that has happened to us in the past week. We sincerely hope that in future it will still be possible for us to enjoy a week in the UK under comparable circumstances. It would be intensely sad if new laws and regulations render a trip like the one we had impossible. Although we realise we have only seen a small part of the country, Scotland is a dream for every falconer. We experienced this dream for a week!



ARNOUD  
HEIJKE

Arnoud Heijke, a Dutch national, was born in 1968. He has actively practiced falconry since 2007, obtaining his falconer’s license in 2010. He has flown goshawks and red-tailed hawks and is currently a board member of the *Dutch Falconers’ Association ‘Adriaan Mollen’*.



WILLEM  
WINDAU

Willem Windau, born in the Netherlands in 1987, has been an active falconer since 2010. After obtaining his falconer’s license in 2017, as a member of the *Dutch Falconers’ Association ‘Adriaan Mollen’*, he has flown two goshawks – one Finnish x European and a *buteoides* x European.





# THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF KOREAN FALCONRY

*by Dong Seok Woo*

Based on old literature, the origin of Korean falconry goes back in time some 2,000 years, to the ancient state of Goguryeo on the Korean Peninsula. For centuries, Korea has played an important role in the transmission and exchange of the culture of falconry on the Northern Continent, being close to China and Japan. An ancient Japanese history book, *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀, mentions that Baekje, the ancient nation of Korea, introduced falconry to the Japanese royal family in 355 AD.

As the Korean peninsula is located on the migratory route of many birds and is a good habitat for raptors, it is eminently suitable for falconry. Traces of falconry culture can be found everywhere in historical data and show both cultural exchanges between nations and an active trade in hunting hawks. Hawks caught on the Korean peninsula have long been popular in neighbouring countries and were given a special name, *haedongchung*. Korean falconry originally belonged exclusively to the ruling class and was centred on kingship and power in the ancient country until about the 16th century. The classical Korean falconry typical of that period was very similar to that which existed at the courts of rulers elsewhere in northeast Asia.

From the 16th century onwards, Korean falconry began to assume a different character from that of China and Japan. At the same time, due to political and religious reasons and long-term wars caused by foreign invasion, interest in the sport declined sharply. However, at a lower level, falconry continued to exist in Korea as a basic form of hunting and its culture has spread far and wide.

## Characteristics of Korean falconry

Since the 17th century, Korean falconry has been the domain of a small group, varying from a dozen to four or five people. This very different from the old days, when the ruling classes could mobilise many people to facilitate hawking expeditions. Goshawks, hunting in conjunction with trained dogs are the main species employed for hawking. The primary quarry was pheasant. Pheasants were in great demand as ritual gifts for ancestors and as high-grade ingredients. The demand for the King and his family was so high that some soldiers hunted pheasant professionally. Well-trained hawks and their handlers usually catch



*Haedongchung*





1930s Korean falconer photo by Sten Bergman



1930s Korean falconer photo by Sten Bergman

two or three pheasants a day and thus have a minimal impact on nature.

Due to Korea's geography, most of the mountains and hills are lower than the nearby plains and have only small forests used for hunting during the season (and for firewood for heating). The leader of a hawking party (called *bongbajee*), with hawk on hand, climbs

up a hill with a good view and readies himself to launch his goshawk. At the bottom of the hill, other members of his party, with their dogs, drive the game (mainly pheasant) towards the hill, beating the undergrowth

with long brushes. This is known as pheasant driving (*ggungtulee*) and the beaters are called drivers (*ggungtulee gun*). As soon as it spots a flushed pheasant, the goshawk instantly leaves the hand of his austringer (*maegggun*) Making use of gravity by flying downhill, it accelerates swiftly in pursuit of the pheasant. Well-conditioned hawks can cover from two to three hundred metres before taking their quarry. It is sometimes difficult for the austringers to recapture a hawk that has failed to take quarry and has, consequently, flown away in a mood of disappointment.

As a result of this, an item commonly termed a *sichimi* (though given a different name in some countries) plays an important role in traditional falconry. Over the centuries, Korean falconry, which has been popularised since the Middle Ages as a civilian activity,

80s Korean falconer photo by Gwang Eon Kim







noted that in South Korea, where only a small number of people hunt, the *shichimi* is more important than modern telemetry.

has utilised a range of furniture, but the use of the *sichimi* has persisted until modern times. Similar equipment is also used in southern China and northeast Asia, where, interestingly, hunting with goshawks under comparable environmental conditions is practiced in a very similar manner. A small plate, cut from a thin sliver of cow's horn, is attached to the two middle "deck" feathers of the goshawk's tail. A white feather of around 25cm in length is, in turn, affixed to the end of this horn plate. The white feather's upper part is usually decorated with a red tassel or a colourful peacock feather (see photo). The plate may also be engraved with the austringer's name.

These white fluttering feathers are often obtained from swans or cranes, though if these are difficult to come by, other feathers may be used: some old austringers told me that, sometimes, they have even used white cloth. It is not easy to locate a grey goshawk against the wintry terrain of the mountains because of its natural colours. Goshawks which have failed to take their quarry will often sit silently, high in trees, and not moving at all unless compelled to by the wind. In Korean falconry, tying a *sichimi* to a hawk when it is ready to go hunting, is both a ritual and an essential part of preparation, whilst removing it means that the season is over.

It is important to realise that without a *sichimi*, hawking is impossible. The loss of a hunting hawk is always a major setback, as. However, it is rare that a hawk is lost thanks, in part, to the highly visible *sichimi*, and of course to the mobilised personnel who keep it, and thereby the hawk, in sight. It should be







My father was a well-known ornithologist and university professor in Korea. Now 86 years old, he still talks with me about falconry. Naturally, I grew up with birds since childhood.

My maternal grandfather was very much engaged in falconry in what is presently North Korea before the Korean War which, having divided one nation into two, made it impossible for him to be an active falconer. My maternal grandfather and father often told me hawking stories when I was young but Korean falconry, as described in my article, almost completely disappeared in the 1960s.

At the university where he was working, my father started a bird protection centre in the 1990s and took care of numerous birds injured in accidents. I have helped my father ever since with rescue and rehabilitation work and, having taken particular interest in the rehabilitation of birds of prey, I studied falconry for that purpose. I also became highly interested in Korean falconry's culture and history and thus started an in-depth study.

After traditional falconry was designated as a national intangible cultural asset by the Korean government, I have been qualified by the state as a *cultural heir*. This has involved me studying the traditional methods of Korean falconry, aiming to research and reveal and relevant data on its specific culture. I am also passionate about the comparative study of falconry cultures from China, Japan and Korea, and those of Northeast Asia in general.

Academically, I majored in graphic design at university, which is very helpful in the work which I want to do. Painting and photo restoration techniques are of immense value in restoring past data, whilst my graphic design expertise allows me to promote the general public's interest in falconry.

I will do my best to communicate this beautiful culture to the next generation.



鷹鷂方 (Ung Kol Pang – Book on Hawks and Falcons, [http://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/bunkoo8/bunkoo8\\_bo058/bunkoo8\\_bo058.html](http://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/bunkoo8/bunkoo8_bo058/bunkoo8_bo058.html)). This classic Korean falconry treatise interestingly was also written in classic Chinese style in traditional Chinese fonts. This book is collected in the Ancient Korean

Literature department of the Waseda University library (collected during Japanese occupation of Korea). The author was Lee, Cho Nyon (李兆年 1269-1343), there is a very good article published on FHT website regarding this book ([http://www.falconryheritage.org/uploads/2502/24\\_Chun\\_.pdf](http://www.falconryheritage.org/uploads/2502/24_Chun_.pdf)).



Portrait of Lee, Cho Nyon the author



The modern Korean font version was published in 1994 by Lee, Cho Nyon's descendant



One of the handwritten copies of the falconry treatise National Library of Korea





# Winter Grouse Hawking

by Matt Gage

My particular falconry weakness is hunting red grouse with peregrines and pointers in wild landscapes, so I share a few thoughts about my experiences of this branch of our art, especially through the winter when red grouse are particularly tough.

Although the mainland United Kingdom is a crowded island, there are still a few pockets of upland wilderness where grouse exist at more natural densities and you can walk all day without seeing another human. These landscapes are in the north, where heather, on which red grouse feed, thrives at altitude. The red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus scotica*) is endemic to the UK. Debate surrounds whether they are truly endemic, or if they are one of twenty subspecies of willow ptarmigan distributed across three continents, but let's not get bogged down in semantics and focus instead on the red grouse's attraction as a quarry species. Unlike most willow ptarmigan, red grouse live in treeless landscapes on heather moorland. Red grouse are a popular game bird and the "Glorious Twelfth" (of August) is a big opening day for shooting in the UK. Driven moors, where gamekeepers carefully manage heather and predators for a more productive environment, can

produce unnaturally high and expensive numbers of grouse for wealthy guns (and a recognised benefit for upland biodiversity).

A few broader-minded landowners and keepers who recognise the low disturbance from hawking sometimes lay on group meets on driven moors, providing terrific days for

falconers and spectators alike. However, falconers will mostly be flying on moorland with much lower grouse densities. Here, local knowledge, good fieldcraft and big-running pointers can enable superb falconry.

When I first started grouse hawking (too many) years ago, it was widely regarded as a summer activity. In August and September, the weather is better and the sun might even shine. Longer days enable big walks to search for grouse, and greater chances of finding some young ones. Hawking is combined with picnics, swimming and fishing, so even your family and friends



Rare sighting of red grouse in their black-and-white winter landscape.







can join the fun (and the clouds of biting midges). Summer grouse are a very sporting test for good falcons, but conditions get tougher as the winter comes on. Despite loving summer grouse hawking, I hankered for a return trip in the winter to try hawking when the warm purple bloom had given way to dark frosty hillsides. I wanted to experience grouse in their wintry element, and fly my falcons at their peak, when they had been flying hard for a few months. Summer grousing means pulling moulting falcons early and often rushing to get them fit. It often felt that falcons

were just reaching their best in the summer when it was time to go home. I thus hatched plans for a late trip, ideally up to the last day when grouse hunting stops on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

Most highland estates follow a traditional diary in which grouse are hunted in summer followed by deer stalking into autumn and winter. People told me grouse would not lie to a point in winter, the weather and conditions were too tough and the estate would be in 'stalking mode' with the grouse put to bed for the year. However, our laird and his 'keepers are open-minded and know a lot about falconry so, when I approached them about a 'winter week', they were happy to give it a try. We drove south that year without the usual gloominess, knowing that we'd be returning later for a final chance. The return trip was tough but educational, and enough of a success to keep us returning ever since.

Kills truly 'count' when you pick a big winter grouse off the frosty ground and marvel at his black flecked plumage and barrel-like condition. The bulging dark chest muscles are lined with strands of bright yellow fat, laid down for when food is locked below the ice. Lucky kills rarely happen, and only fit and experienced gamehawks succeed. If you like a bit of a falconry challenge, winter grouse camp will give you that. It's a special time to be in the remote uplands and experience life in the extra-tough lane. Eagles scour the landscape for victims, red deer come down to the greens to graze, snow buntings flutter on the hill tracks and salmon spawn in the icy headwaters. Grouse sometimes 'pack-up' if the snow comes, providing a dramatic spectacle as their wheeling black flocks look more like



pigeons than gamebirds. You certainly feel like a guest in this hostile landscape. The odds shift very much in the grouse's favour as the winter closes in, and you are now hawking them in a landscape and environment in which they reign supreme. They are clothed from head-to-toe in dark plumage and, as you sit at night on your warm sofa with the north wind rattling snow against the lodge windows, you have to marvel at how tough these wonderful birds are. Winter grouse are delicious to eat, but don't count on too many 'grouse feasts' during your trip once the snows come!

Some key elements for a great winter grouse trip are fit and experienced falcons, equally fit and reliable dogs, falconers who get on well and a lucky break in the weather. The traditional and best hawking partner for winter grouse is the noble peregrine. Grouse are hunted with falcons from a high, waiting-on, position in the 'gamehawking' style and good peregrines excel at this flight. Red grouse are extremely fast in level flight, especially into the wind, so a big height advantage is needed to get close to them. Importantly, waiting-on falconry can provide one of the most exciting hunting spectacles in nature! Both falcons and tiercels are well-matched for grouse, being their natural predators. In general, tiercels tend to be easier to encourage to wait on, and can be quicker movers on the ground, while falcons can stoop harder into a headwind and have a more powerful strike. These are generalisations, and good versions of either make perfect grouse hawks.

Training a falcon to wait-on high for a reward at ground level is a tricky art that has to adapt to the individual falcon, but there are a few considerations for winter grouse. Firstly, there will be few 'soft' flying



Author  
Matt Gage

days in the wintry uplands, with thermals a distant summer memory. You will face wind, rain or snow, so think about getting your falcon used to flying in these conditions. Teaching falcons to handle a range of conditions means accepting that you have to fly in them. I used to be a bit of a high flight control freak, but worked out that it's usually better to go out hawking, even on a wild day, than sit inside eating crumpets. This is especially true at grouse camp, when days might be numbered. Wild weather makes for wild falconry, creating extra challenges in gaining pitch, holding position and general control, but anyone who has trained a falcon with a kite or drone will know that they can easily power up to the bait in almost any wind, so it's about encouraging their mindsets to climb with similar motivation over a point. It's not easy to encourage high waiting-on, especially in





winter conditions and tough weather, but three basics will help in the creation of good peregrine gamehawks: fitness, experience and genetics.

Flying fitness in body (and mind) is something we can directly control as falconers, so push your falcon's fitness before any hunting trip, and get her into prime condition and confidence. Ideally, you don't want to spend your precious time on grouse camp flying her into condition unless you're lucky enough to be there for a long trip. If you can't regularly hunt tough wild quarry before the trip, push your falcon hard up to high drone baits in wild winds to keep her fit and confident about gaining pitch in demanding conditions. 'Luring up' falcons to drones or kites is one great tool, but it doesn't create a well-rounded gamehawk, despite the seduction of watching your big female power up to a high bait. Take the drone away, and swear at the sky as she hangs behind your head at tree-height, wondering what to do. Experience of a range of conditions and good strong quarry are essential to help develop your falcon, and there is little substitute for the real thing if

you want to succeed on winter grouse. Your hunting partner is a long-term investment, so aim to engineer every flight to teach her positive things and continue that throughout her life. Good gamehawks hunting tough quarry in wild conditions, are rarely 'made' in their first year, but evolve through multiple seasons and a stream of challenging successes and educational failures. Don't give her easy choices so that she can avoid wild winds or tough quarry, and get picky. No matter how high your falcon, if she isn't watching the team below and doesn't stoop when the chance is provided, you're not really gamehawking. Finally, give yourself some extra advantage for creating a good gamehawk by sourcing one from breeding birds that have themselves (or their offspring) actually made good gamehawks. It amazes me when falconers appear to be more interested in size and shape than flying pedigree. We all know the nature versus nurture arguments, and peregrines are not domesticated (yet), but from personal experience and having seen many falcons fly, I am convinced that some breeding lines are more likely to make natural gamehawks than others. So, do yourself a favour and seek out proven gamehawking genetics rather than Crufts contenders.







Grouse have many escape tactics to beat wild peregrines, so they use them effectively on our softer hawks. These skills are well developed among winter grouse. Winter grouse, if not regularly disturbed, certainly do hold well to a point. However, if you are slow to cast off your falcon or she doesn't hold position and dominate the point, experienced grouse will more likely flush prematurely. Once airborne, grouse fly very fast and hug the contours which, with their good camouflage, can make them a difficult target. Old grouse often take the hit, keep their head, and then out-dance the falcon on the ground before flying to the horizon, so you need to be mindful of keeping your falcon's enthusiasm for this tricky quarry. Experienced winter grouse in the air will swerve, barrel-roll, jink or stall to evade a good stoop, leaving the falcon empty-handed. 'Dumping' is a common and frustrating escape tactic where grouse drop into heather, reeds, burnside, hags or even sinkholes in the ground. These 'disappearing act' tactics work well and can be confidence-sapping for a falcon that has done everything right. If you think she is getting demoralised despite her best efforts, throw out a dead grouse when she flies well and let her have a pluck. Falcons need to know that grouse are catchable.

Red grouse are secretive game birds that spend most of their time hidden among the heather, so pointing dogs are essential for successful grouse hawking. Training up a good grouse dog is as important as making a good peregrine. Grouse dogs are encouraged to quarter widely into the wind and hold a solid point when they smell live birds. Good pointing dogs have amazing levels of stamina, scenting ability, independence and patience. They work at great distance, quartering the moor for long periods. On finding scent, they need to work out whether it's live grouse, or where a grouse had sat but has now departed. Mistakes inevitably get made in this challenging art, so teach your dog about these game-finding intricacies by giving him plenty of experiences from an early age. As soon as pups will drop and come back to the recall at a few months, I take them out and let them learn about game birds and working with their falconer. This early exposure lets them gain confidence and make mistakes when it doesn't matter. We have had plenty of success with steady, well-bred English pointers and a good one, that covers wide areas, honestly holds grouse and will flush on command, is a treasure. Winter conditions can be tough on dogs, so make sure they have big meals and a dry bed, preferably in front of

the fire. Winter grouse camp can get a bit challenging for falconers too, so take the upland weather seriously. Be extra careful when hawking alone in remote places, always take a mobile or radio with you and upload the excellent '*what3words*' app in case of emergency.

So, you've secured a winter week or two on a moor with a few grouse, fly a good peregrine that handles tough conditions and your pointer is fit and reliable. The forecast is not too bad, so let's head up for the winter grouse camp. Pack the truck with winter woollies, hearty meals and your hawking gear. If the snow falls overnight and you wake up to a white landscape and calm blue skies, God likes you! There is something very special about hawking in the snow, but if your falcon is unfamiliar with the new whiteness give her a good weather with an open view to get used to things. Time is tight in the winter with early nightfall, so get into a flying routine that includes some morning action. Walking out onto the quiet moorland snowscape with the pointers sending up plumes of powder is a real treat, even though I know snow gets boring for those living with it all winter.

If God likes you less, you will wake to cold, wet and windy conditions; proper peregrine skies! Weather your falcon in a sheltered area first thing, then get her tackled up and head out to the hill to brave the elements. Pick an area with a bit of lift and cast off your dog to find birds. I clearly remember my first winter grouse: it was a grey, windy day, with flurries of snow whistling across the icy ground. The moorland looked more like a dark sepia print than the deep purple and sky blue of summer. Maybe this winter grouse hawking was a bit overambitious . . . ? The rest of our team were still on their journeys up, so I was hawking alone. I had run my old pointer *Monty* and flown my old

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Hill keeper  
Freddy  
Mackay (with  
daughter  
Verity):  
veteran of  
more than  
50 years of  
long highland  
winters.





Falcons  
enjoying  
the sun with  
their catch  
of red grouse



tiercel *Bertie*, but no cigar. Now it was time for the reserves . . . *Roseanne* was a good mounting young peregrine, but still a bit green on grouse. As *Monty* was resting, it was his son *Rex's* turn to run, at the tender age of eight months. However, he knew the basic drop and recall commands and thundered away into the wind like an excited teenager. Pretty soon, I noticed that *Rex* hadn't cast back, and was last seen heading towards 'the gully' where a good patch of heather grew. This was promising. Sure enough, as I crested the rise, *Rex* was firmly on point at the top of the gully. As I approached, untying *Roseanne* with chilly fingers, I heard the 'tokking' of a cock grouse. This was good, as it confirmed the presence of at least one bird, but

also bad, as it often signals a premature flush. I ducked down and struck *Roseanne's* braces. It was risky that the grouse would flush as she took flight, but dusk was approaching so it was last chance saloon. As the hood came off, I pushed her quickly into the wild wind, quietening and holding the tokking grouse. She took a big pass downwind (why do they have to do that?), then started her climb into the icy northerly.

*Roseanne* pushed hard into the granite sky, relishing the workout after a long journey north in the hood. I crouched as she mounted even further downwind, sadly her standard mode, but at least climbing in the tough conditions! *Rex* didn't move; his whole world was the grouse ahead. After what seemed like too long,





*Roseanne* had reached a superb pitch and began her characteristic 'beeline' towards me, marking my time to make into the point. I watched the falcon bouncing in the wind overhead as I walked sideways to the dog, pausing and crouching when she took a back-cast, but now enjoying the flight as her tremendous pitch dominated the point. As she flickered high above me to hold position in the turbulent air, I approached *Rex*. Unlike his dad *Monty*, he would not flush on distant command, so I needed to get in close and dirty to get the grouse up with him. *Roseanne* was now right above us, and at a magical height, so I ran forward, shouting *Rex* to "get 'em up!" He nervously ran forward and then froze again, giving some time for *Roseanne* to track well forward of the point, giving her more advantage than she sadly realised. Now was the time, so I stumbled ahead of *Rex* shouting crazily, before hearing the magical whirring of a flushing grouse. A single black bird erupted from the heather, uttering no call, and powered into the wind away down the gully. I couldn't take my eyes off the grouse, fearing he would dump, but knew *Roseanne* was coming 'as a force from above'. As she reached her maximum speed and pulled out of the stoop, I heard the air rushing past her body as she approached. Striking very hard, she bounced the old



MATT  
GAGE

Matt Gage was not introduced to falconry by any particular person or event, but had an innate obsession with raptors and falconry from as far back as he can remember, mostly lived through books and watching wild hawks. His first hawk was a one-eyed haggard male buzzard called *Nelson*, loaned to him for a year by Nick Fox. *Nelson* taught Matt a lot, the most important lesson being not to try and do falconry with a one-eyed haggard male buzzard. Fantasising about falconry in such lean times, and not being allowed to dodge school or university, Matt feels incredibly privileged to now be able to fly peregrines over pointers. He also breeds a few peregrines each year, relying on great IAF falconers to fly them and make him look good. To help fund his passion, Matt works as a University Professor, specialising in evolutionary biology. He has worked with the IAF for more than 15 years, watching it evolve from a small group of dedicated and able volunteers into the large, professional and inclusive organisation we recognise today.



cock onto the frozen ground with such lethal force that he didn't move another beat, whipping round to bind onto her victim. He was an old grouse who knew so much about this harsh place, but his time had come. He was charcoal black on his front with frosty white flecks. I marvelled at his perfect form as *Roseanne* plucked with dewy eyes, and triumphant *Rex* snuffled into the kill. A first winter grouse for both falcon and pointer! If I didn't get another flight, my winter trip north had been more than worth it.



Falconers and  
spectators  
at a winter  
grouse  
hawking  
meeting in  
Yorkshire, UK  
(photo Colin  
Dilcock)



# Falconry at the Aragonese Court of Naples (15<sup>th</sup> century)

by *Baudouin Van den Abeele*  
(*FNRS, University of Louvain*)

Since the time of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, whose kingdom of Sicily also included a large part of the southern Italian peninsula, Naples has known several changes of dynasties, beginning with the Angevin kingdom founded by Charles I of Anjou (1266-1285), which lasted until the first decennia of 15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1442, Alfonso V of Aragon (fig.1) conquered the city and became King of Naples, known as Alfonso il Magnanimo. His son, Ferdinand I of Aragon (fig.2), succeeded in 1458 as Ferrante I, ruling until his death in 1494. These two rulers were famous for their magnificent lifestyle, as patrons of artists and as collectors of works of art, and their court (fig.3) was one of the most brilliant of early Renaissance Italy. It

Fig. 1.  
Alfonso V  
of Aragon  
by Pisanello,  
1440 (Paris,  
Louvre, Codex  
Vallardi).



Naples was undoubtedly the most important European centre for the art of falconry. However, at the time he wrote these lines, research about the hunting activity of other 15<sup>th</sup> century princely courts had not yet developed, and nowadays one would be somewhat more prudent about a “ranking” of courts. Investigations into hunting under Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy’s rule in the Low Countries (Niedermann 1994) and at the Gonzaga court of Mantova (Malacarne 1998 and 2003) have shown the very developed organisation of hunting activity at these courts, and the same could be said about the Sforza court of Milan, or the French royal environment. It is, however, true that there are impressive figures about falconry at the Aragonese court of Naples.



Fig. 2. Ferdinand I of Aragon  
(Paris, Louvre).



Fig. 3. Naples, Castel Nuovo, 15<sup>th</sup> c.





Fig 4. *De arte venandi* of Frederik II of Hohenstaufen copied for Ferrante I (ms. Valencia, Biblioteca universitaria, 601, ca 1470, fol.1).

Archival documents show the vast provision of hawks from various origins (Germany, Candia and Spain) and of associated furniture: Lupis relates the order of 354 pairs of varvels with the arms of both Aragon and Naples on behalf of King Alfonso in 1455, and of 180 bells for sparrowhawks in 1473: astounding numbers. The large hawking parties organised during the realm of the two kings could involve several hundred participants, in a dazzling demonstration of power and magnificence. Hawks were sent as diplomatic gifts to other courts in Italy, France and Spain, which was in fact a common practice at the major European courts.

The possession and acquisition of hawking treatises also attests to their passion: Naples' royal library included a series of books on the subject. Lupis describes 11 still extant Italian manuscripts on falconry which belonged to Alfonso and/or Ferrante I, and he recounts a few others that are mentioned in old inventories but do not seem to have survived.

There were also Latin treatises on falconry in their library, which I have had the opportunity to examine at first hand. Let us start with the renowned *De arte venandi cum avibus* of Emperor Frederick II. A huge

manuscript (33 x 21cm, 304 f.), now in the University Library of Valencia, includes the full text of *De arte venandi*'s six books, plus copies of two small 12<sup>th</sup> century treatises (*Gerardus falconarius* and *Grisofus medicus*) and of the *Ghatrif* and the *Moamin*, the two Latin translations of Arabic treatises made for Frederick II. The latter text, in a manuscript kept in Vienna, was the subject of an article in a previous *International Journal of Falconry* (Van den Abeele 2018). The Valencia codex is a refined book of excellent parchment, opening with a page adorned with a monumental capital P in gold and colours, measuring c. 20cm in height (fig. 4). In the lower margin, the page shows the Aragonese arms of Naples in a decorative medallion, revealing that it was commissioned by order of Ferrante I. Unfortunately, this manuscript of *De arte venandi* does not include any proper illustrations of the Emperor's treatise, unlike the famous Vatican manuscript of Books I and II. However, this volume shows that *De arte venandi* was still considered an important text in Naples two centuries after its redaction. As to the Latin *Moamin*, it also enjoyed lasting success at the Italian courts, especially that of Naples. Alfonso and Ferrante I had



Fig 5. *Moamin falconarius* copied for Afonso V (New Haven, Yale University Library, Beinecke 446, ca 1450, fol. 1).



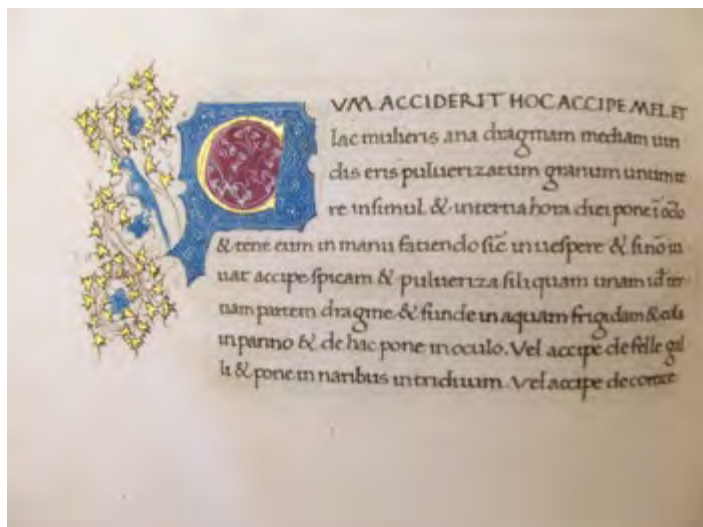


Fig. 6.  
Beginning of  
book III of  
the *Moamin*  
(same ms.,  
fol. 43v).

no less than four copies of it in their library. Beside the Valencia codex, two other copies are unadorned, but the fourth one (now in the Beinecke Library at New Haven, Connecticut) opens on a splendid page with a double golden frame filled by flowers and a few birds, as well as *putti* bearing the Aragonese arms (fig. 5).

At the top of the page is a most original painting of a falcon chamber or mews with six hooded falcons on a perch – most likely peregrines: two adult males and four immature females. It is a rare view of the kind of rooms that were reserved for hawks, a topic on which we have little information for the medieval period. The codex is written on especially thin and smooth parchment, and each chapter begins with a golden letter in a red or blue frame. For the main divisions of the *Moamin* and the beginning of other texts (the volume continues with copies of the small treatises of *Dancus rex* and *Guillelmus falconarius*), the initials have a delicate marginal vegetation with gilt leaves, and on one occasion a bird (fig. 6). This certainly was one of the most refined of Alfonso's manuscripts.

The Aragonese kings not only possessed copies of older texts on falconry, but also promoted the translation of some of them. One of their most talented and prolific scribes, Iammarco Cinico, translated the Latin treatises of *Moamin*, *Dancus* and *Guillelmus* for Ferrante I. The autograph copy of Cinico's work is still

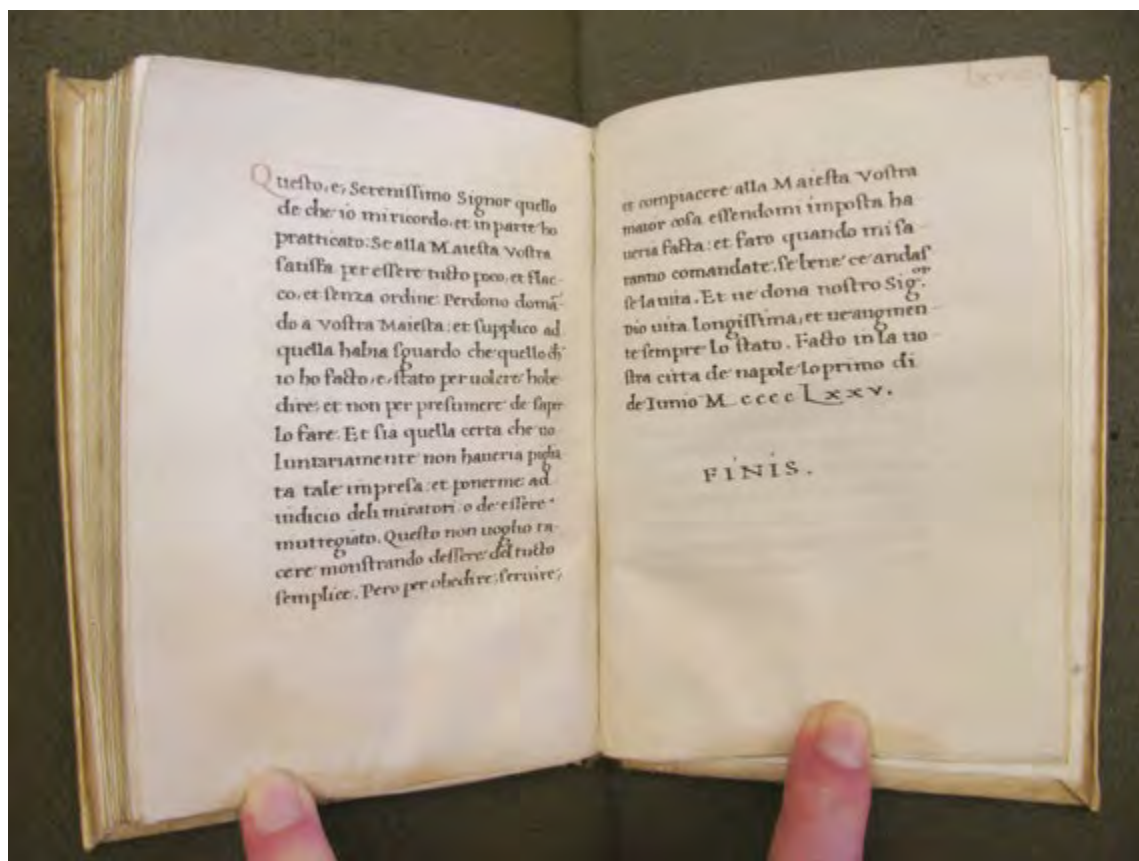


Fig. 7. Epilogue of the *Practica de citraria* by Mathias Mercader (New Haven, Yale University Library, Beinecke 124, 2nd half of 15<sup>th</sup> c., fol. LXVIIv-LXVIII).



extant, in the famous Laurenziana Library of Florence (ms. Ashburnham 1249); it has a front page with a frame in “bianchi girari”, a kind of marginal decoration formed of white twigs contrasting with a dark background, which is typical for Italian manuscripts of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The margins include the arms of Aragon on the lower side and four green parakeets on the right side. Cinico’s translation of *Moamin* has been edited and studied for its very rich vocabulary, which preserves traces of the Arabic terms borrowed by the Latin translator (Glessgen 1996). Translations from other languages were also patronised by the kings of Naples. Lupis recalls the mention of an Italian version of the famous hunting manual of Gaston Febus, the *Livre de chasse*, but it has not been preserved.

Finally, Alfonso and Ferrante I also encouraged the writing of new texts in Italian. In 1475 an archdeacon of Valencia, Mathias Mercader, wrote a treatise entitled *Practica de citraria breve* (“Short practice of hawking”) on behalf of Ferrante I: this has been preserved in a few 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts (Madrid, Palermo and New Haven). The text occupies some 40 folios (80 pages) in the two first manuscripts, but 68 folios (136 pages) in the New Haven manuscript, which is a tiny pocket-book of 10 to 14cm (fig. 7). This *Practica* has only been edited most recently (Fenollosa 2017). The *camerlengo* (chamberlain) Count Innico d’Avalos, a most loyal officer of Alfonso il Magnanimo, dedicated to Ferrante I

two short treatises on special subjects related to falconry: the first about the treatment of avian cancer and the second about hawks’ moults. These two texts were edited by Lupis in his article quoted above (Lupis 1975). The first of them includes a most original list of hawks’ names, which deserves special attention: this is the subject of the following article, by Michela Del Savio.

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BAUDOUIN  
VAN DEN ABEELE

Baudouin Van den Abeele is Professor of Medieval History at the Belgian Université Catholique de Louvain and Senior Researcher of the Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique. For more than 30 years, he has devoted most of his research to the history and culture of medieval falconry. Besides numerous articles, he has published books on medieval Latin, French and Italian treatises on falconry (1994, 1998) and their manuscripts and illustrations (2013), as well as a French translation of Emperor Frederick II's monumental *De arte venandi cum avibus* (2000). He is currently developing a database on the medieval iconography of falconry.



## His Majesty's Secret Falcon Names: King Ferrante I of Aragon's collection of names

by Michela Del Savio

In looking at the first two images reproduced here, one notes that both manuscripts belong to the beginning of the modern era: the first dates from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, while the second is from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup>. Each contains a copy of an essay on the care of trained hawks, apparently written by the Spanish

chamberlain of Aragon's court in Naples, Count Inigo d'Avalos. As a senior official in a multi-lingual court, Inigo spoke, wrote and produced documents in Italian (mostly in Neapolitan), Spanish and Catalan, depending on the situation or the monarch's preference.

Since Naples was centrally located in the Mediterranean Sea area, merchandise and people arrived there from numerous places in Europe, Africa and Asia. The city was considered of rare beauty, and the Aragon family chose it, above many other places, as their residence. At that time, falconry was an important symbol of power in addition to carrying high social and economic status. Consequently, the Aragonese court employed many falconers to train falcons for the King.

King Ferrante I, a very skilled hunter, was especially passionate about hawks and so, understandably, had a library that reflected his interests, containing new and copied texts on the art of falconry. Among these texts there is an *Essay on the Preservation from Cancer*, which is included in the two manuscripts shown in the images attached. This medical text instructs how to recognise symptoms of respiratory diseases which can be contracted by hawks, recommending both a number of precautions to ward them off and remedies for their treatment.

The animal's health is obviously one of the most important considerations for a caring owner. Falcons and hawks were often considered to be significant elements, one might almost say family members, in the lives of those who kept and hunted with them, since they were constant companions during daily activities. The bond is comparable to that which exists nowadays between humans and their pet animals such as dogs and cats. It is therefore understandable that these animals were given names.

For domesticated animals of the past, mammals as well as birds, only a few names have been handed

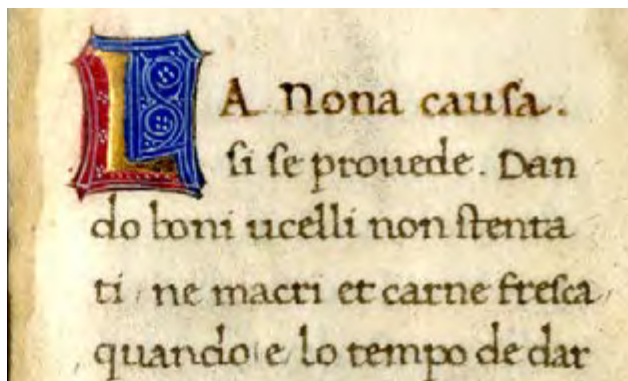


Front page, MS Palermo, Biblioteca della Regione Sicilia, XIV F 13 (f. 2r).

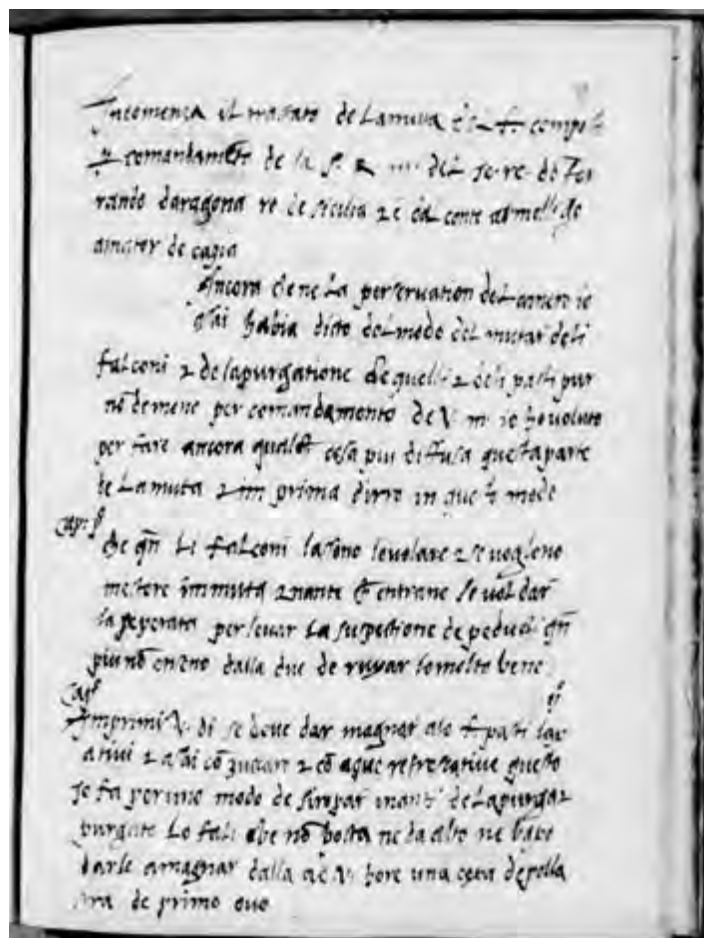


down to us, usually cited in literary works. However, in the case of these two manuscripts which follow the essay, we find a list of over one hundred names given to falcons and tiercels. It is preceded by the caption “*Here begins the list of the beautiful names for the falcons of His Royal Majesty, conceived by the Count chamberlain, most Christian hunter*”. These names are listed in alphabetical order below:

*altano, amato, animoso, aragona, ardito, baldanzoso, (el) balocta, barboyno, bentevoglo, besin, bianchetto, bianchin, blondillo, boffone, bon compagno, bonavista, (el) brimo, caczarecta, calandrella, cardolin, carissimo, cherubino, chirico, (el) ciantre, ciprioto, conserva, contegnoso, contessa, corbecto, cortesano, cortese, cortesia, (lo) costumato, (la) dame, damiczella, dammi aiuto, desdignoso, (lo) devoto, diamante, discretissimo, discreto, domestico, donzella, duchessa, excellentismo, figlico, forcavento, furapasto, gaba altrui, galante, galiarecto, gambamostra, gioctonigello, gractiosa, grolioso, guaglardissimo, gualuppo, guarrippia, hipocrito, iguaza, iobonico, lassame andare, mal compagno, malafaccia, malagratia, malandrino, maltractato, maravigloso, matin, 'namorata, napinecto, nol darrò, non conosciuto, non me lassare, non mentechare, non perdere, non te fidare, non te gabo, non te prezo, (il) non visto, pagion, passabactagla, passatucti, patriarcha, (lo) perduto, perfidoso, picinin, piglatucto, possante, potente, prezato, ragazino, reale, regina, repezata, reprocza, romdino, romito, rondon, rossin, rubinecto, saccomanno, scarmozin, (el) securo, senza tacca, sicilia, sinreproche, soccorremi, (i) ssoro, sparabocta, spingnarda, succurso, superbo, tantardito, tantovola, tenache, tenimi caro, tieni quello, (el) tiratore, triumpho, turzato, venimi detro, villanello, vinzeguerra, volante.*



A detail from MS Palermo (f. 17r)

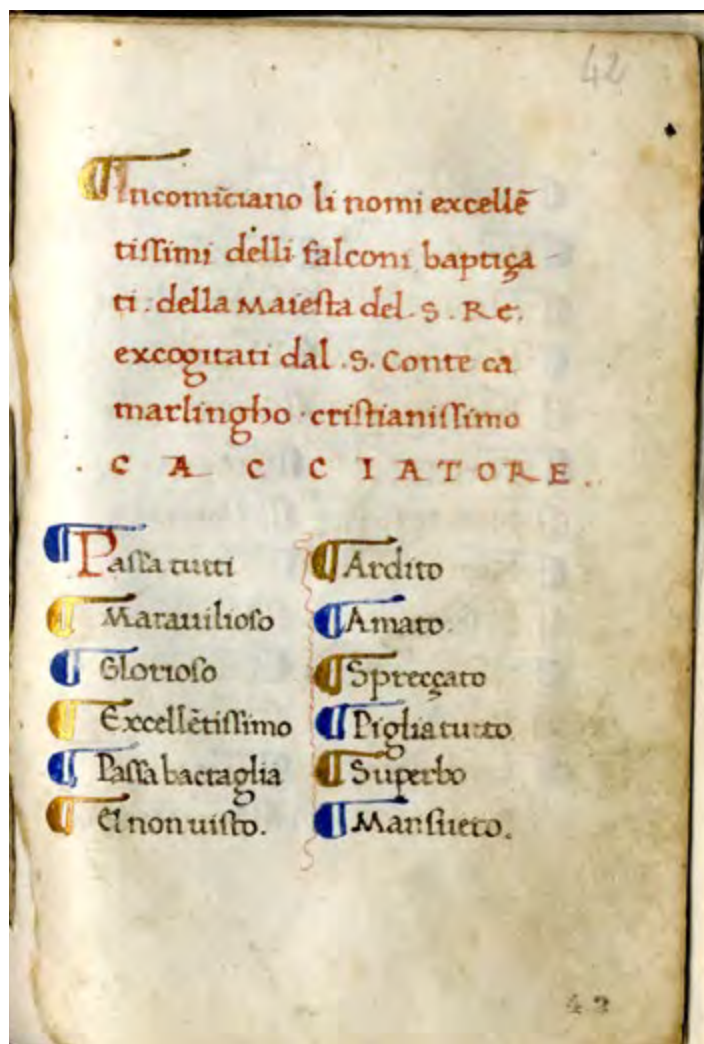


A page of the Trattato, MS El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio, ç IV 6 (f. 136r).

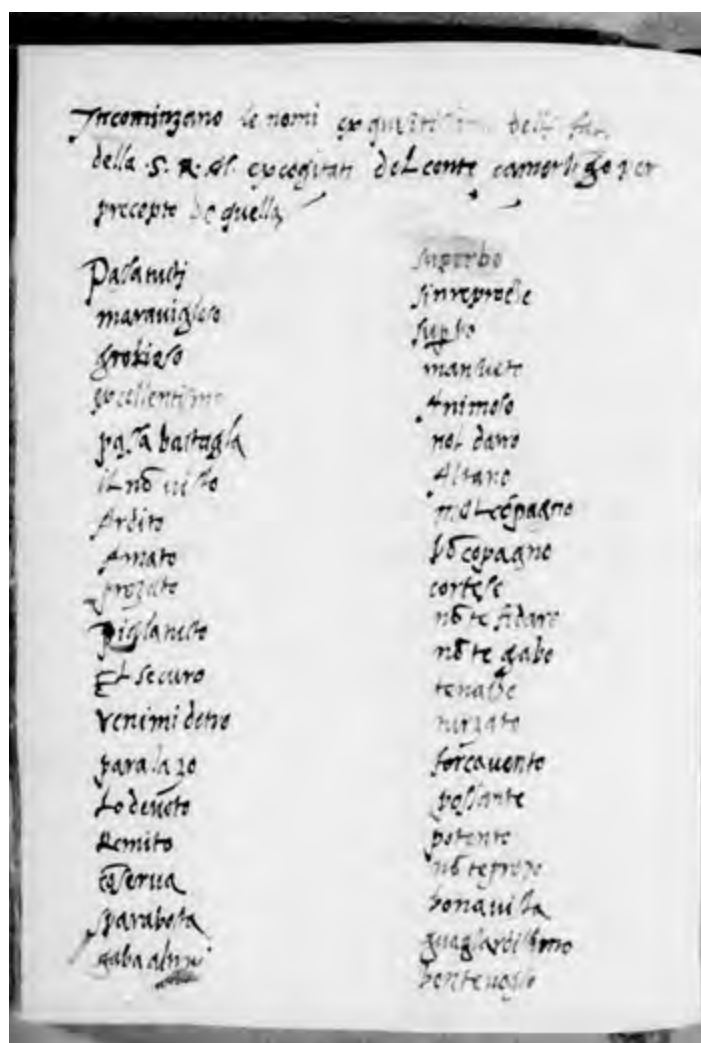
One cannot help but wonder how, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, these names were assigned to animals, specifically hawks.

Nowadays, pet names are generally given following a few recurring themes: from the classical literary tradition (*Oreste, Apollo, Pluto*), from cinematography (*Merlino, Garfield*), colloquial (for example *Fido* or *Fuffy*, and all the names that refer to the onomatopoeic sounds children make: *Bubiù, Nenè*). In the case of trained hawks in Italy, I have found examples named after deities (*Ares, Arya, Gea, Kali, Thor* and *Zeus*), specifically Egyptian deities for sakers (*Amon Ra* and *Seckmeth*), along with heavenly bodies for accipiters (*Aldebaran, Bellatrix* and *Luna*). There are also names based on the scientific name of the animal (*Ubi* and *Bubi* for specimens of *Bubo bubo*, the Eurasian eagle owl) or physical characteristics or attitudes (for example *Scheggia* “lightning”).





First sheet of the name list, MS Palermo (f. 42r).



First sheet of the name list, MS Escorial (f. 138v).

For some of these, especially the longer ones, two forms of the name exist: an extended formal one used while on the ground, and a contracted one for calling the hawk when in flight (for example *Seckmeth* during flight becomes *Seck*. Similarly *Alderaban* is abbreviated to *Alde* and *Bellatrix* to *Bella*).

Even in the list contained in the two manuscripts we can observe certain characteristics when names were assigned:

a) Names that pertain to the hawk's character and bearing, or which refer to its attitude while hunting: *ardito* ("daring"), *el seguro* ("the confident"), *excellentissimo* ("the most excellent"), *guaglardissimo* ("vigorous"), *lo devoto* ("the devoted"), *mal compagno* ("bad companion"), *senza tacca* ("without stains of sin": both Spanish and Italian interpret *taca/tacca* as used for "stain"), *sinreproche* ("without fail"), *volante* ("flying")

b) Names based on the bird's physical characteristics, including the colour of its plumage or, possibly, of its eyes: *bianchetto* ("white"), *blondillo* ("light blond"),

*gambamostra* ("uncovered leg"), *napinecto* (diminutive of *nappa*, that also means "tuft of beard") and *rubinecto* ("ruby colour": this relates to the iris of the goshawk, one of the most popular species trained in Italy, which may turn a deep red as the hawk ages)

c) Names which probably are a reference to the bird's geographic origin or to its destination once trained: *Aragona*, *Bentevoglio* (which could also be an example of type e), as in "ben ti voglio" which means "I care for you"; however there are testimonies that in 1482 King Ferdinand of Naples gave Giovanni II Bentivoglio of Bologna the right to use the last name *Aragona*, *Ciprioto* ("from Cyprus"), *Sicilia* ("Sicily")

d) Military ranks or court titles: *contessa*, *damiczella*, *duchessa*, *patriarcha*

e) Terms of endearment: *amato* ("beloved"), *carissimo* ("dearest"), *non me lassare* ("do not leave me")

f) Words of encouragement: *dammi aiuto* ("give me help"), *non perdere* ("don't lose"), *passatutti* ("overtake everyone"), *tantovola* ("fly far"), *vinzeguerra* ("win the war")





These names reflect the mixture of languages that characterised the cultural environment of Naples' court. We can see traces of Spanish, Neapolitan and north-eastern Italian. After all, Venice was the doorway to the East through which hawks were traded and consequently, also falconers, falconry books and manuscripts.

In Spanish, for example the name *blondillo* contains the nexus *bl* and the diminutive in *-illo*; in *figlico* and *iobonico*, the diminutive in *-ico*; in the name *el brimo* we see a transcription error for the Spanish *el brinco*, “a movement that is done by raising the feet lightly from the ground, in a graceful jump”; in the nouns *synreproche* and *tenache* we note the spelling *-che*; in *sinreproche* and *reprocza* we see then the Spanish *reproche*, “reproach”; in *guaglardissimo*, *gualuppo*, *guarrippia*, *iguaza* we note the spelling *gua-* for the sound that English would render as *ga*; *guarrippia* derives perhaps from the Spanish *jarifa*, a term that Spanish takes from Arabic; it is the same word as “sheriff”, which means “noble, well composed” or “adorned”; *iguaza* derives perhaps from the Spanish *yegua* + *asa*, which could be translated as “filly”.

*Paralazo* (from the Spanish *Parar* and *lazo*, “take the leash”) could, instead, refer to a curious hawking habit of King Ferrando reported by Francesco Carcano, called *Lo Sforzino*. In his work of 1596, *Tre libri degli uccelli da rapina* (*Three Books of Birds of Prey*), Carcano relates an anecdote that is illustrative of the reality of hawking related practices that existed five centuries ago. We learn that Ferrante loved to train a goshawk which he carried on his left fist, while holding in his right hand a stick about seven feet long, to which was attached a quail on a leash (*lazo*). Raising his left fist with the goshawk, he served the hawk this bagged quarry by waving his wand. In this way the hawk was trained to take (Spanish *parar*) quail by Ferrante, a practice that seemed to have amused him greatly.



A detail from  
MS Palermo  
(f. 2r)

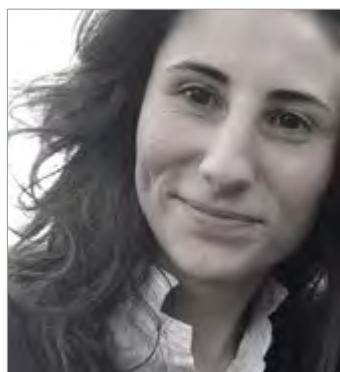


A double page of hawks' names from MS Palermo (f. 42v-43r)



<p> <i>galiardo</i>  <i>teniquella</i>  <i>springando</i>  <i>l'accomano</i>  <i>repetata</i>  <i>furn pa't</i>  <i>glabnante</i>  <i>de'figue</i>  <i>aragera</i>  <i>Aslia</i> </p>	<p> <i>Armate</i>  <i>Asubnato</i>  <i>Rabene</i>  <i>Quirce</i>  <i>liprior</i>  <i>besone</i>  <i>le glute</i>  <i>notonafuto</i>  <i>Adonne</i>  <i>monnente</i>  <i>graffola</i> </p>
<p> <i>Correline</i>  <i>Andugpo</i>  <i>pa'gion</i>  <i>Bonubene</i>  <i>cadaveta</i>  <i>gioitengole</i>  <i>Ragazine</i>  <i>Sanmozim</i>  <i>carcolin</i>  <i>Alatin</i> </p>	<p> <i>Nome de tercelen</i>    <i>Pinin</i>  <i>navineto</i>  <i>belen</i>  <i>brad</i>  <i>Ratin</i>  <i>malantura</i>  <i>lebonico</i>  <i>Reprozza</i>  <i>figura</i>  <i>barboyme</i> </p>

We can imagine that the hawks named this way really existed. Who knows if these names could inspire a modern falconer and that they could come to life again after a long interval?



**MICHELA DEL SAVIO**

Del Savio (born in Turin, 1989) has worked as a scholar passionate about manuscripts dealt with, and published primarily upon, the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and hawk and human medicine. She began to work on Van den Abeele's suggestion, and currently is devoted to an Italian recipe book, and on some language. Her most recent publications are: *Storici tratte da alcuni ricettari italiani del Rinascimento: aduzione delle ricette, note lessicali, indici, glossari* (Firenze, Sismel - ed. del Galluzzo, 2017); *La seta. I manoscritti, l'appendice* (Firenze, Sismel - ed. del Galluzzo, 2017); *Onomastica dei falconi di Sua Reale Maestà* (Firenze, Sismel - ed. del Galluzzo, 2017). Recently published: M. Del Savio, "Osservazioni mediche attribuite a Inigo Van den Abeele per la cura dei falconi attribuiti a Inigo Van den Abeele", in *Manuscripta*, 2017, 37-51.

This article was adapted from: M. Del Savio, "I nomi propri dei falconi di Sua Reale Maestà Ferrante I d'Aragona", in *RiOn. Rivista italiana di onomastica*, XXIII (2017), pp. 110-119. New informative facts were added from the recently published: M. Del Savio, "Osservazioni sulla tradizione manoscritta e testuale dei trattati per la cura dei falconi attribuiti a Iñigo d'Alvalos", in *eHumanista/IVITRA* 16 (2019), pp. 37-51.



# Hawking in Argentina with the Bicolored Hawk (*Accipiter bicolor*)

by Fabian Zancocchia

## The Art

Nowadays, we often think of falconry as an art; the sum of all the human thoughts and ideas on the practice that have come down through the years to us, with a driving passion. Falconry is practised with this passion and with dedication and the reward is the chance to witness the flight of a trained hawk that hunts its prey naturally.

Some may think that this ancient art, so often practised in solitude by us falconers and austringers, has a uniquely solitary recompense as well; that it is a form of individual accomplishment. Nowadays, however, thanks to all the modern social media networks, the art of falconry can be shared with others who have the same passion, perseverance and commitment to our sport.

## The bicolored hawk (*Accipiter bicolor*)

There is no doubt that the bicolored hawk is one of the best falconry species to be found in Argentina. An accipiter native to the American continent, its range stretches from México all the way to Tierra del Fuego. The males average 36 centimetres in length and 260 grams in weight, while the females are up to 46 centimetres in length and weigh up to 400 grams. It is a mercurial, silent hunter which ambushes its prey. Several subspecies can be found as well.

My hunting partner is *Snow*, a female bred in September of 2019 at Claudio del Fabro's breeding centre in Jesús María, Córdoba, Argentina. *Snow* is somewhat larger than the average bicolored female and she hunts well at a weight of 430grams.

## In the field

The region where we hunt is a vast, open plain without mountains or thick forest. This allows for long flights and also makes recovering the hawk relatively easy. We usually go to the field at noon or in the evening. In my experience, every hunting day is a heady mixture of adrenaline and satisfaction with the unexpected never far away. To be out with my hawk when she hunts and captures her prey is absolutely inestimable. The

flights are usually short, some just 50 metres, but, on occasions, the chase can be much longer and go on for 400 or 500 metres.

## Quarry

In our area, the most common quarry species taken include the southern lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*), the collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), the Zenaida dove (*Zenaida aurita*) and the Picazuro pigeon (*Patagioenas picazuro*).

## Use of the plate

When one of our hawks has captured its prey, we cover the quarry with a plate. This technique was developed by our friend, Leandro Martin Roberts and has been





recently modified by another austringer, Leandro Jara. The plate, made either of wood or of plastic, is used to cover the prey and keep it hidden from the hawk. At the same time, the top of the plate is garnished with a partial or full crop which is offered to her as a reward. The plate is horseshoe shaped so that it does not interfere at all with the hawk's legs. In this way, while she is calmly feeding, we can quietly remove the quarry from beneath her. Often, it is still alive.

### The Bicolored Hawk Group

In Argentina, we have formed a group called *Bicolor Argentina*, whose members are all passionate about this beautiful hawk. The members come from our many different provinces and so; the hawking has assumed slightly different forms in the various areas because of their diverse geographical features. Some members of our group hawk in the plains of the wet *pampa*, where I hunt, but others hawk in the mountain range of Córdoba, which has a more complex and enclosed countryside. Therefore, the flights tend to be shorter and recovery of the hawks is often more difficult there.

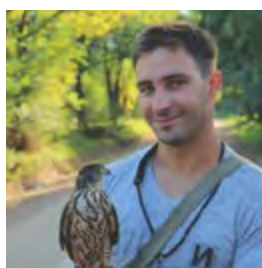
Through working together and sharing our achievements and our mistakes, being members of this group helps us all to refine our knowledge of hawking with this thrilling bird – the bicolored hawk. This is very relevant for us, as the species has only been flown in Argentina for approximately four years. The falconers who have trained this species are very enthusiastic about its easy handling and successful hawking results

I want to thank Leandro Jara, Leo Roberts, Claudio del Fabro and Adrian Reuter for helping me to write this article, which has given us the chance to describe hawking with the magnificent bicolored hawk in Argentina.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me: [falconry71@gmail.com](mailto:falconry71@gmail.com)



LEANDRO JARA



LEONARDO MARTIN ROBERTS



CLAUDIO DEL FABRO



ALFREDO CORAPI



FABIAN  
ZANCOCCHIA

About 20 years ago I started flying my first bird, an American Kestrel. As a child, I already wanted to practice falconry, but due to lack of information I didn't know where to start. When my sister moved to Spain, these limitations ended, as it gave me access to falconry books as well as the necessary equipment. A group of friends that was active in this art, also helped me to realize my dreams.

My next bird was a tiercel peregrine, followed by other peregrines, both tiercels and falcons. I then obtained a male Harris hawk, which I flew in the same period as my male peregrines. About 5 years ago, *Accipiter bicolor* began to be bred in my country. It was not a well-known or popular bird for falconers, but I can assure you that since I began to fly this bird, I haven't stopped. They are versatile and spectacular.

I am currently President of the Argentine Falconers Association, and Director of the Education Commission (Subgroup) of the IAF Latin American Working Group (GTLA).





## *Partridge and Pheasant Hawking in the English Midlands 2019/20*

*by Simon Tyers*

*Storm  
taking off*

Having spent many years flying falcons at various types of quarry, particularly red grouse, my everyday hawking is now on low ground with a team of longwings at game, namely partridge and pheasants

The current team consists of *Sonic*, a five times intermewed gyr x Barbary, *Storm*, his three times intermewed half-brother, and *Shade*, a twice intermewed female gyrfalcon. All are parent reared and spent three weeks in hack chambers prior to training. Having flown many gyr x Barbaries I am a huge fan. Their ability to climb, to tackle strong winds with ease and their tenacity and determination make them a great game hawk. My other passion since childhood is for pure gyrfalcons.

Firstly, I will explain how we operate. Being fortunate of having taken early retirement, I can devote all of my time through the season to falconry. My hunting partner is also in the same position, so we manage everything between us and fly five falcons. Weather permitting, we hunt every day of the season. All falcons, once reclaimed, are put through some fitness training to the drone and we are usually hunting by mid September for partridge and pheasants in October.

My favourite quarry of all has to be the grey partridge: a true, iconic, British gamebird with a real heritage within falconry. Sadly, the days of relying solely on naturally produced quarry are long gone and

as I average over 100 days hawking per season, hoping for sufficient wild game would be futile. Currently, we release 500 greys per season on a vast amount of ground. After six seasons and providing the weather is favourable, some naturally produced coveys are seen each year. Some of our ground had few natural greys before we started but are now showing improvement. However, the number we commit to release each year is more than enough to provide daily sport and leave plenty to replenish the breeding stock on the ground. With pheasants, our main ground is in Lincolnshire and we see a good number of wild broods each year.

Our partridge are released in small groups from ideally situated release pens, protected by an electric fence with a secondary electric fence, two to three metres out from the pen. This provides a safe and secure area for released birds to feed and roost. Each pen is covered with a camouflage net, which, firstly, enables the partridge to feel safe and, secondly, it prevents any falcon above seeing into the pen if flying near to release sites. Birds are put into the pens at around 12 weeks old and given a few weeks to acclimatise before releasing. Usually, six to eight birds are released at a time from a group of around 40 per pen. We have feeders and drinkers around the pens and lots of feeders away from the release sites in all directions which helps encourage the birds to spread out to surrounding ground.

Occasionally, birds are flushed from around the pens to encourage dispersal and they soon start to venture away. Once partridge are no longer frequenting the release sites, more are released. This goes on throughout the season and soon flights are available everywhere. If anyone has doubt about the quality of released game, then they need to see well managed game at first hand. So long as they are given sufficient time, they soon become wild.

On a typical day's hawking we always attempt to find birds well away from release areas first: only if we struggle, which is very rare, do we look closer to the release sites. Under no circumstances are recently released partridge flown. Since we always do a count of wild coveys and pairs at the beginning of the season, we will fly these when opportunity arises but don't overdo it. We check the release sites from a distance or from a vehicle and have large drinkers and feeders to reduce interaction. Our farmers leave us some stubbles, which the partridge love, along with nice short hedges with suitable margins. Our field sizes are suitable for great pitches as are the open fens in Lincolnshire.



Our pheasants arrive in early September at 10-12 weeks old and are completely hopper fed to create wildness. Hoppers are placed further out on the fen as they expand their range. We have a good natural stock of wild birds which give us early season sport and so leave the released birds until they are mature and well-spread. We feed out into rape fields as they tend to hold well and it's good to run the pointers in to locate them. We fly some out of dykes, which can be a little testing, but it does work. If the stubble is left, we place hoppers out on that too, attracting both pheasants and partridges. The now popular over wintering green fertiliser crops also provide great game cover.

Dogs play an important role in our sport, for which reason I run a team of three pointers, using them in varied ways. When hunting partridge, we tend to spot and mark coveys from the vehicle giving us the best opportunities and will put a falcon in the air some distance away without disturbing the game. Once the falcon reaches a pitch and is back overhead, we can start to walk in and we take a pointer at heel. Once close and with the falcon well placed, I send the dog in to find and flush. Partridge sometimes go before the dog is able to hold them but occasionally we do get a point.





With pheasants it's a different game. Again, we will often spot pheasants out in rape or other cover. Sometimes the falcon is put up a distance away and we do the same as with partridge but, more often, we do get a point. The second option is to run the dog after spotting a pheasant in good holding cover and get a point. Once pointed and when a falcon is cast off, the pheasant will often hold well to the point. The advantage here is that the flush can be precise, which is very important, especially with getting the correct position and timing right for the big falcons. The dogs also come into their own when we fly Pheasants from dykes. In these conditions they can be very hard to persuade to leave with a falcon overhead so a good reliable dog is essential. All my pointers are well-schooled in all aspects, especially on holding their points.

My hybrids are conditioned to wait on, very high, and keep climbing whilst we walk in. This has many advantages. The game will have seen the falcon and, as they are unaware of us at this stage, will clamp down well where we have marked them. As we approach, they all will be aware of us but will hold due to the falcon high above. Generally, so long as the wind is not excessive, such very high pitches mean that a downwind flush is not always necessary, and attention can be paid to flushing away from likely cover.

This season has been a testing one. The wet weather contributed to very poor success of wild partridge. September's weather was good and, with our early season flights, we could thermal fly and create some breathtaking pitches, over 2,000 feet not being uncommon. Controlled thermal flying doesn't come easy: it takes an experienced falcon to look for and ride thermals and, most importantly, return over the falconer at pitch to be served. The recent introduction of GPS tracking has opened up a whole new world as we can now see exactly what our falcons are doing. In the past when a falcon connected with a thermal it was often referred to as "going on soar": it was given no time to return of its own accord but, rather, was lured or followed and tracked down. Sometimes, frustratingly,

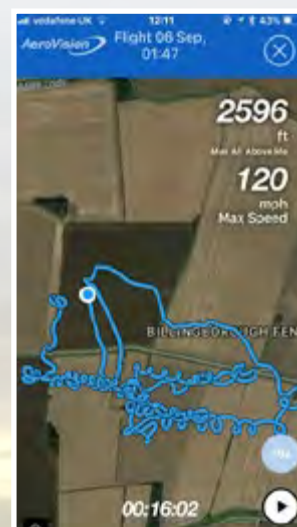


it returned to the spot it was released but the flight had been abandoned. Weight was subsequently reduced to keep the falcon closer, often resulting in loss of pitch. Now we can allow the falcon to fly as it should, and the end result is often staggering – but takes time, training and confidence. An interesting fact GPS has taught me is that falcons can see thermals. From multiple GPS tracks and our own observations, we have seen falcons straight line, as if in pursuit, for up to ¼ mile or more, then immediately hit a thermal. These actions are too direct and too regular to be coincidence.

This season the wet weather delayed all the harvest and saturated the ground. Combined with the devastating effect of the flea beetle on rape, we were seeing vast areas of cover failing. One aspect that did work to our advantage was that more stubble was left, which was a saviour to some degree as we hopper-fed this with great success for both pheasants and partridge.

Wind has a massive effect on high flying game hawks and this year we've had far more of our share of it. There are always different opinions on flying in strong wind, and mine is always in the interest of maintaining my falcons' high performance. If the conditions dictate that they would not achieve a suitable pitch I will not fly. I cannot see the point in rewarding

GPS Track  
Showing  
Thermal Flight  
Track







a falcon that has only managed to get to 300 or 400 feet when on a normal day it would be at least double that. He would deserve a reward as he'd worked hard but I'd see it as a negative, so there is always tomorrow. Quite often on these windy afternoons, if patient, you get a brief interlude where a quick flight is possible. One advantage of flying larger falcons like Gyrs is that the wind is not always such a problem, especially with experienced birds. Built to fly in the wind, Gyrs can truly impress in these conditions.

With very little wintry weather and frosts few and far between, we didn't have many occasions to enjoy those cold, crisp, clear blue sky days; the high pressure days where the falcons seem to mount cleanly, quickly and soon melt away above you, only discerned by a little flicker as they climb higher above. Once above 1,100-1,200 feet in these conditions, they disappear from view but again this is when the GPS plays a vital role in telling me their position overhead so I can determine when to flush. It's wise to watch the flush on these flights as it is virtually impossible to pick up

the stooping falcon. By following the flush, you will first hear the falcon ripping through the thin air in its final approach and you'll be lucky enough to see the level out and possible strike or bind.

As the season progressed, typically, the game proved harder to pin down with the shortage of cover so field craft really played its part in getting any flight worthwhile. Due to the continual mild weather, we didn't have enough cold conditions, particularly later in the season, to pull the game back in to feed areas. What we did see this year was the grey partridge pairing off from the middle of December, earlier than usual. This can prove difficult as they often pop up in unexpected places and sometimes can be easily missed until you accidentally bump them while walking in on another mark.

All the team flew well throughout the season and average pitches were again impressive. We took on some extremely difficult set ups as these are well seasoned falcons who know their job and will wait on endlessly while I take long walks in. I enjoy flying wild red-legs as they are very wise and very testing. Released reds can often be a nightmare, being in big groups, and more tendency to run. Greys, more often than not, hold tight but can still sometimes flush before you're on top of them.

The hybrids achieved some great milestones this season. *Sonic* accounted for his 150<sup>th</sup> partridge, while *Storm* accounted for his 100<sup>th</sup>. *Sonic's* 35<sup>th</sup> of this season also made my 300<sup>th</sup> partridge taken with these two falcons. *Sonic* is a bird of routine and only accepts handling well at hunting time. His consistency is unbelievable as he never fails to fly to a great pitch and







has an impressive success rate. He commands the sky and his presence is enough to hold down the wildest of game. *Storm*, much easier to handle, is usually the one that pulls off excessive 2,500 feet plus pitches. He likes to take his time to take to the wing, so we allow him to fly from a block placed on the top of a vehicle.

As with every season, there were memorable flights. One of *Storm's* involved a wild tiercel that joined him on a flight. The wild falcon was not a threat and returned with *Storm* at over 1,000 feet. We flushed a covey of partridge and both stooped. Almost simultaneously, both falcons knocked a partridge down. Being so close to people, the wild tiercel was unwilling to find his and made off leaving *Storm* to his. Another was on a very tricky and elusive covey of wild Lincolnshire red-legs. On a perfect winter day, we spotted them in a great location. *Storm* was put up a long way away and, once back over me at pitch, we approached from two directions. By the time we were closing in he was so high he was out of sight: only by GPS could we assess his position. The flush was perfect and, though none of us saw the stoop, he accounted for another partridge.

*Sonic's* flights are generally memorable but some that really stand out are worth noting. On a warm September afternoon, he found a thermal so we sat back and watched him and he was soon a distance away and out of sight. At 1,200 feet and climbing and knowing the partridges' position relative to cover some distance away, the threat of him being too high, and being beaten to cover, could have been an issue. I moved away from the vehicle and waved my hand (some use a glove) to call him back overhead. Some falcons can be difficult to call off a thermal, but I can always rely on *Sonic* to respond.

As soon as I waved, the GPS showed he immediately came off the thermal and started to track back over us, still climbing. The partridge flushed on cue and he killed his chosen one in the stoop, very close to cover. On one of the season's last flights, on an afternoon windy enough for us to question flying, he made a spectacular effort to gain pitch. Lincolnshire's flat terrain gives no natural lift, so a falcon must know how to mount without it. Knowing his high fitness level, I put him up. He took a direct line to a distant wooded area and used this to help him get up. Powering his way to a phenomenal pitch in the conditions, he returned high overhead. Sadly, the partridge had other ideas and, despite all efforts, they cut past us towards a safe area. *Sonic* made a great attempt but missed. It's not always the kill that makes a good flight and he was well fed on his return.

*Shade's* new programme of alternating hunting with drone work has certainly helped achieve far better



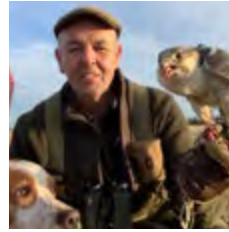




performances. She still has some way to go but she is taking more pheasants in the style I seek. She has become very reliable, flying like a gyr should by taking big sky and always returning. She is more patient in waiting for a flush and her technique is improving. As with all gyrs, it's a long drawn out affair and I won't rush things or take drastic measures to put more game in the bag with her. She is still clearly pliable, allowing me to change methods as needed with positive results.

She has gone through different stages this season from taking with ease to playing with some and then ending on some good consistent kills. Early on in the season, she came back at a tremendous pitch over a cock pheasant I had marked in stubble. What I thought was to be a perfect set up ended in disappointment as, before I was anywhere near the mark, with *Shade* approaching high but not in position, the pheasant chose to run low and very fast. *Shade*, I've found, will not entertain game on the ground but will wait until it takes to the wing. On this occasion the pheasant made its escape but the early signs from *Shade* were positive.

I have put her up in increasingly stronger winds and In the last week of the season I put her up over a pheasant in a hedge in a very strong wind. She made it look so easy and having taken a circuit downwind, climbed into the wind above and beyond me with ease and at a very rapid rate of climb. Still climbing, I decided to move a little closer to the flush so I could produce immediately but the pheasant was having none



SIMON  
TYERS

2020 sees my 50<sup>th</sup> year of falconry, which has been a huge part of my life since childhood. I was employed for 18 seasons as falconer for the late John Fairclough and, as such, was the last true UK professional falconer in recent times. With a passion for working dogs, especially pointers and cockers, I was also a highly successful gundog trainer, training all breeds and winning spaniel championships as well as making up 13 field trial champions in the UK. Having successfully hunted shortwings, my preference now is game hawking with longwings. Having spent 18 seasons red grouse hawking, I now concentrate purely on low ground pheasant and partridge hawking. I have a very understanding wife, Julie, who often helps out with the falcons and dogs and accompanies me in the field. I am a Council member and regional chairman of the British Falconers' Club.

of it. Flushing prematurely, it proceeded to climb away across wind. It was probably the most impressive strike from *Shade* all season as she literally cut through it and killed it stone dead in the air.

Each falcon is only ever flown once a day and fully fed on any game taken. Only if I have to abort a flight early are they flown again. This works for me and my team are always consistent as I look for top performance all the time and love big, but practical, pitches.

Despite the weather, we managed 110 days' hunting. Hopefully next season will bring more cover for the pheasants and kinder weather at the partridges' hatching time. My dedication to the falcons, dogs and quarry will continue unabated as will my striving for the complete package of taking game in style and from great pitches with my team.







2014 Carlo in his first season.

## Return of the Wanderer

by Elisabeth Leix

In 2015, my husband Klaus and I were enjoying our annual partridge hawking trip to Poland. A few days before our return home, Klaus lost *Carlo*, his peregrine tiercel. *Carlo* had, unfortunately, taken to chasing the many local pigeons and had become a successful pigeon hawk. After one of these self-hunting episodes, he failed to return. I reported on this in the *Deutscher Falkenorden (DFO) Yearbook* of 2016 and in the *IAF International Journal* of 2017.

We painstakingly searched the area before our departure but to no avail. We even visited several of the local pigeon fanciers, in case he had turned up at one of their lofts, but there was no trace of him. Jarek, our friend, who himself was a falconer at young age, vowed to continue the search on our behalf. Hoping that he would be able to retrieve *Carlo* later on, we left his hood, his jesses, his leash and his papers in Poland.

We stayed in contact and enquired about our missing peregrine at regular intervals. We learned that he had been spotted several times but, on each occasion when Jarek arrived at the reported location, there was nothing to be seen but the plucked feathers of his latest kill. After about a year, the feedback ceased and we gave up hope of ever seeing him again, let alone getting him back. Whilst saddened by the loss of this excellent, high flying, falcon, we were consoled by the certainty that

he would survive, unless he fell into the clutches of one of the pigeon fanciers.

In 2019, just before we left for this year's Polish hawking trip, we received a phone call from our Polish friend with some exciting news. A breeder of German shepherd dogs had contacted him, offering for sale

*Carlo in bad plumage after his return*





The team of 2015. From left to right: Carlo, my peregrine Frodo, our daughter's peregrine Butzi and Ricki, another of Klaus' peregrines.

a falcon wearing anklets. Knowing that we were due to arrive in Poland, Jarek suggested that the three of us should go to see this falcon a few days later. After four years, we were doubtful that this falcon would turn out to be *Carlo*, yet we couldn't wait to get to Poland and see.

The day after our arrival, we made our way to the dog breeder's home, a drive of about thirty minutes. When we turned into his small yard, we immediately saw a wire cage standing in the middle, under the full glare of the blazing sun. Inside it was a frightened, feather-damaged peregrine. We were welcomed by the dog breeder and he began to recount to us how he had come across the falcon. While he was doing so, Klaus began to free the peregrine – a tiercel – from the miserable surroundings of the wire cage. He attached a pair of jesses, a swivel and leash and helped the tiercel up on to his gloved fist. As

he stood there shakily, we could see that he still had his backpack and his address plate – *our* address plate – in place. The details of the story were interesting.

About a year and a half earlier, the falcon was caught and kept captive by a pigeon fancier. *Carlo* had chased a pigeon into a small stable and had managed to kill it in there. Having observed all the action, the fancier had locked the stable door while the tiercel was preoccupied eating his fill. We will never know why he did not immediately kill this raptor that was feasting on one of his precious pigeons. Many wild hawks and falcons meet their end like this year after year. We were lucky that this pigeon man (we never discovered who he was) had reacted differently. For one and a half years *Carlo* was kept captive in a dungeon-like barn without daylight or water. Every other day, a live pigeon was



Carlo after having killed a pigeon.



Negotiating the return of our bird while carrying the 'compensation'.





Removed from the cage, feather damage visible.

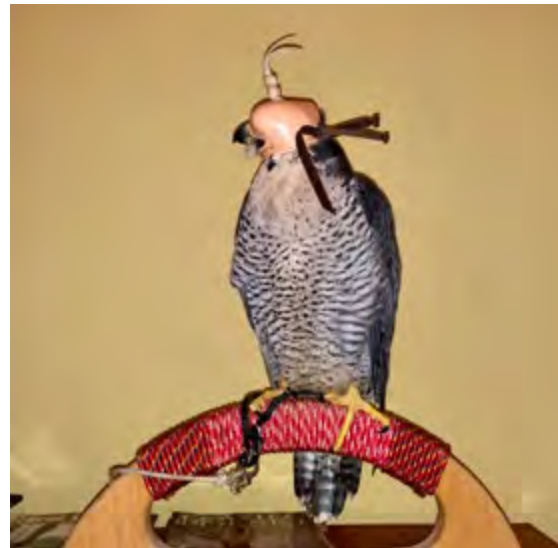
thrown in for his sustenance. All this explained his poor plumage, his dirty, scaly feet and the very pale hue of his cere. It was upsetting for us to see him in such a miserable state but, compared to many other illegally captured falcons, he was lucky, being alive.

After more than a year, it seems, the man gradually lost interest in keeping *Carlo* in his barn and to continue feeding him his pigeons. He may also have realised, that the tiercel was of some value. He decided to try and exchange him for a German shepherd dog, which would be of use to him. He contacted a German shepherd breeder, who in turn contacted Jarek, because he knew he had been looking for a falcon a year and a half earlier. The long lost falcon had finally turned up.

After our return to base, we blocked *Carlo* outside in the weathering area with the other falcons. He immediately began to display and call to them. Did he remember *Frodo*, who had been one of our team four years previously, or was he directing his attention to the older female peregrine we had with us? We could not

tell but he certainly seemed happy to see them. Still loudly calling, he stepped into the bath we had provided and bathed vigorously. He repeated this process three times in a row! On that very first day, he jumped to the fist to be fed, even though he was quite fat and high in condition. Over the following days, he continued to bathe several times daily. Afterwards, he stood in the sun with raised plumage and spread out his wings to dry and to replenish his vitamin D levels. I wondered how much he had missed this daily ritual?

Back in Germany, we placed him into a fine free lofted aviary with a window looking out on the courtyard, where he will remain until his moult has finished next autumn. We have already decided not to take him with us to Poland again as there is just too much risk of him reverting to chasing pigeons. Instead, we may well try flying him at crow in Germany. In any case, we plan to keep you updated on how the story of *Carlo* continues after his four year's sojourn in Poland.



*Carlo* after two days at home – front view.



ELISABETH LEIX

Elisabeth Leix works as a project manager for an engineering firm that tests parts and prototypes for the high performance sector of the automotive industry. Her initiation into the world of birds of prey and falconry commenced at just twelve years of age, when she took care of an injured kestrel. In 1982, having attained both her hunting and falconry licenses, she became a member of the *Deutscher Falkenorden* (DFO).

Elisabeth has been active in several falconry projects. In 1985, she began her involvement with peregrine release programs in both Germany and Poland. Her contributions to international falconry include serving for four years as a member of the IAF women's working group, the *WWG-IAF*. In 2002, she became vice president of the federal board of the DFO and in 2018 was elected its president. In 2014, she was awarded the Federal Republic of Germany's Order of Merit.

In 2018, Elisabeth published *Die Beizjagd, Erfolg in Pruefung und Praxis* (Hawking: Success in Study and Practice), a text that she compiled and edited in partnership with other dedicated falconer-authors. This was later followed by *Herrscher der Luefte* (Lords of the Sky), a coffee table book for the general public. Elisabeth has published several articles about falconry in German and international publications.

Currently, Elisabeth flies peregrines in the waiting-on style, mostly at partridge. She also hawks crows with a goshawk.

# A Story With a Happy Ending: A Gyrfalcon Tiercel at Hack

by Xavier Morel

*Belzébuth*, a 2019 dual imprinted grey gyrfalcon (bred by my brother), who I tame hacked at home, is a real survivor, as the following relates. Being the first time that this particular gyrfalcon pair bred, the mother's inexperience with feeding the young led to an undernourished bird. When we realised the situation the gyrfalcon was taken from the nest at 20 days of age, very low in weight and in poor health. This was quite a gamble, but worthwhile.

Because of his low weight and possible stress caused by the abrupt change in habits, plus the hot weather when he was taken out, I immediately started preventive treatment for aspergillosis by nebulisation. After some days this was proved necessary as he had difficulties in breathing for the first three or four days, but recovered well afterwards.

Little by little, he recovered and gained weight but, compared to a normal gyrfalcon, was way back in development, weighing 30% less than he should have normally, and with severe hunger-traces on his feathers. Feeding him primarily with small quantities of fresh

pigeon (on which I have always fed my gyrfalcons without any health issues) and quail, I managed to keep him alive and growing.

At 50 days old, we noticed an infection in his mouth, which I initially thought was trichomonas but, after consulting the vet, the conclusion was that the gyr had pseudomonas, a quite strange disease that attacks the mouth and the tongue. He was immediately treated efficiently but, as a consequence of the disease, lost 1/3 of his tongue, which grew back little by little over the next 6 months.

As a result of all this, the baby was kept loose in the garden then brought into the house to spend the night in a transparent imprint tank. To avoid undue food-imprinting, I fed him on a little plate in the presence of other falcons I had on the block in the garden. He had to learn to find food by himself which worked pretty fast. The tolerance level of the other falcons with that annoying little baby was quite surprising, really interesting and amusing to witness. He was wandering around between two adult imprint peregrines and two brown birds commencing their training. The gyrfalcon often played with the hawks' leashes, pushed them away from their blocks or shared the block with them, yet we never witnessed any aggressive behaviour.

As he continued growing, I equipped him with a backpack and a Microsensors solar track transmitter, letting him free in the garden all day and taking him in at nightfall. He started to fly around on 15<sup>th</sup> July. After 3-4 weeks of hacking, his normal routine was to spend the night on the house's chimney, leave around 6am then return around 8am for a full crop, after which he would spend the day mostly with us. He would wander again at the end of the day, coming back around 8pm for another full crop of pigeon. Until Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> August he never went more than 5km away from home, but this was to change.

On Monday 19<sup>th</sup> August he went north in a straight line and I recovered him close to Rotterdam, more or less 140km from home as the crow flies. On Tuesday he headed north again to be recovered in Amsterdam's

Baby taking  
a nap





suburbs, 200km distant. Flying north once more on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> August, he stopped to sleep on a building on the shore of the Netherlands' Wadden Islands, some 250km away. As I could not go and recover him that evening, I decided to leave him out, curious to see what he was going to do next the next day and wondering if, getting hungry, he would head south again and try to return home.

The interesting thing about his travels was that he always took the same flight direction, with a difference of 5-10km, always heading north, despite very different weather and wind directions during those days. I'd assumed he was taking thermals and letting himself drift away with the wind, but not at all. Analysing the GPS flight data, he rarely flew above 70-80 metres, maintaining a steady pace of 50-60km/h.

No GPS position came in on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> August, and we were obviously worried the whole day, but finally, at 6pm, we learned that he was in the middle of the North Sea, some 250km from shore! Being in the middle of the sea during the day, the transmitter could not send the positions and stored them in its memory until it had some network. On Thursday evening, noting the positions coming closer to the German coast at a very regular pace, I concluded he was on a boat bound for Germany.

Analysing the data afterwards, I could see he left his roost at 6am, took some rest in the sea around 8am then travelled north again until he was 250km from shore.



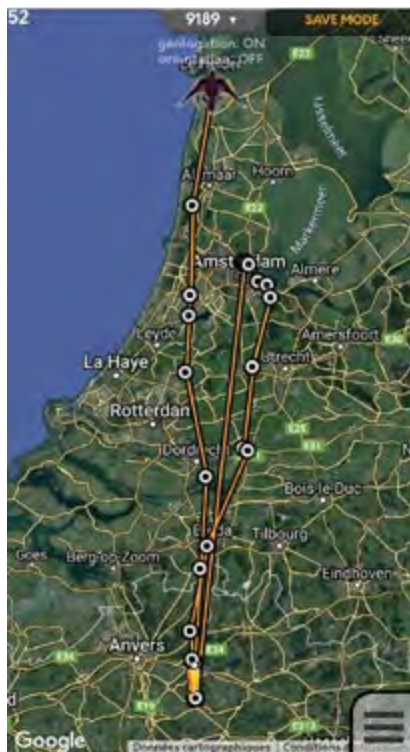
He then probably realised his mistake, turned around and returned southwards, presumably seeing the boat on the way back as he made a kind of turn towards UK of nearly 30km and stopped on the boat as a stowaway. I guessed he must have seen a huge cargo ship from very far away . . .

Playing gyr

Leaving home Friday night, aiming to intercept him somewhere on the German coast, at 1am I picked up my friend Glenn Van Buuren, who wanted to help and live the adventure with me. Glenn had already helped



Little gyr  
and Rua



Three First days



Overall trip



Resting on the car

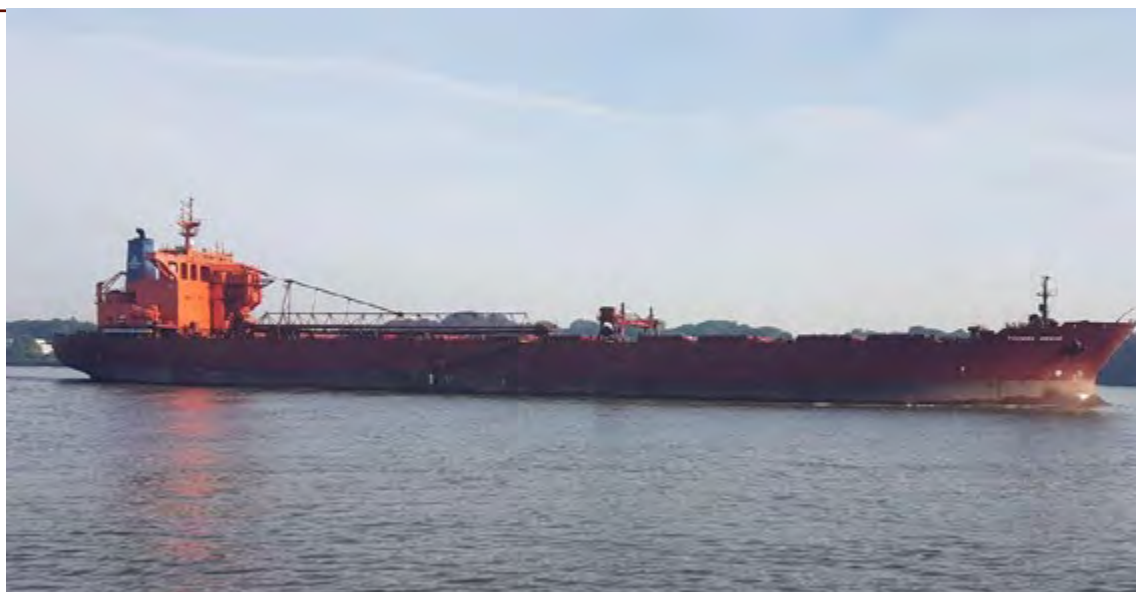
me to recover the bird on the first day out far away, on Monday. As he lives more or less in the neighborhood where the gyrfalcon ended his first trip, he checked out the position and waited until my arrival to ensure he was safe and sound. As a joke, I told him that Monday that the next trip would finish in Denmark and that he could come with me to pick him up. Actually, I was pretty close to reality.

During the night I saw that the positions were moving into the Elbe River, heading towards Hamburg, Germany. Trusting that the hawk would leave the boat

at first light, I started becoming worried when, around 7am, I hadn't noticed any movement. I concluded he must still be on the boat, as no major change happened to the positions regularly sent. Had somebody taken him? Was he safe? Was he even still alive?

We hurried at full speed, exceeding 220km/h on the German autobahn, to try to intercept the travelling boat before it reached the port of Hamburg, but actually missed it by two minutes. Thus, another race against the stopwatch began, towards a shore I spotted on Google Maps, between Hamburg Airport and the port. We

Cargo ship





finally managed to arrive five minutes before the boat, still unsure whether he was on a small fisherman's boat or a big cargo ship.

Eventually, we saw a huge cargo appearing and I connected the real time GPS which showed me the bird was 3km away, in the middle of the Elbe River. I started luring and shouting like a madman, with people having their morning walk on the beautiful promenade looking at me as if I had just landed from the moon!

I began getting very nervous as the ship got closer, thinking something had happened to the bird then, suddenly, I saw on the real time GPS that he had crossed the wide river and was sitting atop a big office building. Glenn managed to spot him with the binoculars. The gyrkin had definitely heard me and left the ship to search for me.

Luckily enough, we were close to a local ferry and managed to cross the Elbe, after which the bird was recalled to the lure in the middle of the office building's beautiful grounds. Although he looked stressed, changed – more mature – and had very dirty, greasy feet and belly feathers, probably from the ship's fumes, two very happy but exhausted falconers took the ferry back, gyrkin on the fist.

On the way back home, in Holland, I got busted by the Dutch police for speeding and I explained this incredible story to them. They were so charmed by it that they let me leave without any fine, after having taken a selfie with the gyrkin. I got back home the next night at 1 am: what wouldn't we do for our hawks?

My God, what an adventure!

It would definitely have been impossible without the Microsensory solar GPS transmitter. No other falconry telemetry in the world would have allowed me to recover the bird safe and sound at that distance. It sent over 100 positions from Monday to Friday and was still at 80% charge at the end, even though it had been in very unfavorable conditions, in the middle of the North Sea, without any phone coverage at all. Analysing the flight data again, I concluded he never took any thermal at all, flying north at heights of 50 to 80 meters in a straight line, despite different wind directions on all four days. The only explanation I have is that his instinct told him to head towards Norway. This was an incredible experience!

*Belzébuth* now waits-on as a game hawk and has a very stable mindset. He's got a very nice character



and I am building him up little by little, as gyrs are hawks that should be developed over several seasons. He had another lucky escape in mid-September after a near-fatal seizure at a great height, during training to the quad-copter in Scotland. I think I pushed him too hard on that peculiar, very windy, day and that he had a sugar level problem as sometimes happens with gyrs and gyr hybrids, though he recovered from that accident very quickly.

Having saved him, almost dead, from some uncaring parents, my aim was to get him strong and fit. I certainly believe that was achieved: he covered over 1,000km in five days. Needless to say I was very lucky he took a cargo ship towards Hamburg instead of Taiwan.

I want to give a huge thank you to Glenn Van Buuren for his help, to Kelly Van Looy for her never-ending patience and, obviously, to my brother Patrick who gave me the hawk that allowed me to live a unique adventure.



XAVIER  
MOREL

Xavier started falconry in 1979 at the age of 13, under the tutelage of his brother Patrick Morel, the former IAF president. He flew goshawks for the first 10 years and then switched over to longwings. He has practiced falconry in most European countries as well as in Morocco and has worked as a professional falconer. Xavier is currently sales manager for Microsensory GPS Telemetry Systems, which he helped to develop.





# IAF AGM *Spain* 2019





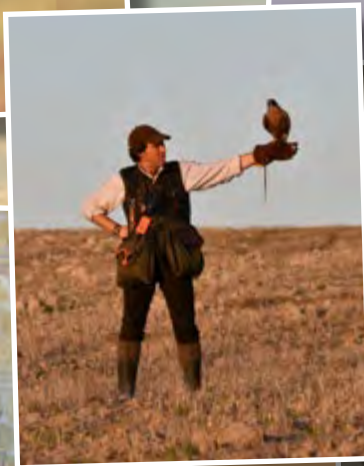






Photo credit: Rob Palmer

