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Front cover: Portrait of Arab falconer by Mark Upton.
"The painting was done in 1996 from an old transparency I found of one of my father's early hawking trips to Abu Dhabi in the 1960s. It is gouache on card, 22x16in (55x40cm). The falconer was Biti in Aqis, falconer to Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, with a saker. They hawked from Abu Dhabi island to the land around Buraimi Oasis where they stayed for some days. They were hunting houbara, stone curlew and desert hares with passage peregrines and sakers".

Back cover: Photo of adult male sharp-shinned hawk taken by Rob Palmer. Palmer wrote: "I was rather lucky when I took this picture. I was leaving a friend's house when I noticed this adult sharp-shinned hawk in a small tree. He let me get to about 15 feet from him when I snapped off a couple of shots. Loveland, Colorado, USA, about ten years ago (2011), with a Canon 500mm lens, Canon Mark IV camera, hand held, 1/1000 sec 18. Sharp-shinned hawks are very secretive and I only have a handful of photos of them".



Photo Credits Journal edition 2021

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A falconer's living room. Photo by Arnaud van Wettere.

Editorial

Havoc! A cry with which Anglo-Saxons would let their hawking companions in the field know that a hawk was loose. The word carries connotations of chaotic, out of control circumstances. As falconers, we fully appreciate that when a hawk is loose, anything can happen. By extension, we are perhaps more accepting of the power of nature than most people: our sport is one in which life can change irretrievably in a matter of seconds. For all this, few of us could have expected, two years ago, the havoc that a microscopic organism could wreak on a global scale. By the time last year's *International Journal* was being finalised, many of us were already facing unprecedented restrictions not just regarding our sport, but in every aspect of our lives: metaphorically speaking, if not literally, there seemed a long, dark winter ahead.

After what was, for many, a year of uncertainty, not to mention a severely curtailed hawking season, in March 2021 I heard from an old friend that he had received his first dose of the local Sputnik V vaccine and was well. I thus lost little time in arranging my first shot. Three weeks later, after a second jab, I was protected. Our son could immediately go back to school full time and my wife would increase her hours in the office. Spring had arrived in many ways.

By this time we were already well under way with the new edition of the *Journal*. We had contacted some twenty authors and articles were being written and received. Regretfully, we lost some good content due to 'exclusivity issues' but with some extra effort we were able to fill the content gap by the beginning of April. The old editorial team, Ewa, Maurice, David and Julian, was still in place but we had lost Noel Hyde from New Zealand. However, Heather McNemar kindly joined our team. Her article in this edition on hawking in West Virginia's Appalachian foothills gives the perfect introduction to our newest member.

We kindly invite those among our readers who harbour discrete ambitions to put to paper their experiences in the field with hawks to get in touch for the 2022 edition. We hope that this edition will bring you pleasure and diversion.

Dick ten Bosch
Senior Editor

Editorial Committee



DICK TEN BOSCH



MAURICE NICHOLSON



HEATHER MCNEMAR

كلمة من الرئيس معالي / ماجد علي المنصوري /

السيدات والسادة، المندوبون، وممثلو الأندية،
وأصدقاء الاتحاد العالمي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة،

كان العام 2020 هو الأكثر صعوبة في رئاستي للاتحاد لغاية اليوم. فقد شهد العالم كله شكلاً من أشكال الإغلاق بسبب جائحة Covid-19. وفي حين كانت بعض القيود التي تم فرضها منذ أكثر من عام شديدة، فقد كان بعضها الآخر أقل حدة. وفي ظل ذلك، فقد استمر الحماس الذي يوحدنا جميعاً، لكن الصقارة التي تجمعنا في حُبها، تمت ممارستها بدرجة أقل في العديد من الدول في ظل شروط التباعد الاجتماعي والتدابير الصحية الأخرى المعمول بها. ولعل أكثر ما افتقدناها في هذه الأزمة العالمية هو فعاليتنا الدولية وتواصلنا الاجتماعي وقدرتنا على إظهار كرم الضيافة تجاه بعضنا البعض. ومع إطلاق اللقاحات وخطط عودة السفر بين الدول، فإننا نأمل أن نرى نهاية هذا العام الحزين قريباً جداً.

لقد استمرت الحياة، كما استمر عمل الـ IAF، وصرنا جميعاً على معرفة وخبرة كافية بتكنولوجيا مؤتمرات الفيديو، مما أتاح للاجتماعات والمحادثات وورش العمل أن تستمرّ وجهاً لوجه، حتى لو كنا مُتَوَرِّعين في قارات بعيدة عن بعضها البعض وفي مناطق زمنية مختلفة، إذ لدى الـ IAF اليوم منظمات أعضاء في جميع مناطق التوقيت، باستثناء 3 منها.

في نوفمبر 2020، عقدنا اجتماع مجلس مندوبي الـ IAF عبر تقنية Zoom لاتصالات الفيديو. وقد حضر الاجتماع نحو 75 من المندوبين وممثلي الأندية، وهو عدد كان من الممكن اعتباره كبيراً فيما لو حصل خلال اجتماع وفق الظروف الاعتيادية، إنه لأمر مشجع أن نرى مثل هذا الحماس. لقد كانت فعالية هذه التقنيات الجديدة تعني أنه يمكننا أيضاً التصويت إلكترونياً، ويسعدني بهذه المناسبة أن أتقدم بالتهنئة للسيد Adrian Reuter من المكسيك، والذي تمّ انتخابه بالإجماع نائباً لرئيس IAF لأمريكا اللاتينية ومنطقة البحر الكاريبي. لقد استخدمنا تقنية Zoom عدّة مرّات منذ ذلك الحين لعقد اجتماعات مجموعات العمل الإقليمية والمتخصصة، وكذلك بهدف إحراز تقدم في مشروع متحف الشيخ محمد بن زايد الدولي للصقارة، ولتنظيم سلسلة مميزة من المحادثات نصف الشهرية "مشاركة المعرفة" التي طورها توني جيمس ومجموعة العمل الثقافية، والتي تستقطب بشكل دائم اهتماماً جماهيرياً يتجاوز الـ 70 مُتابعاً.

لقد حدثت أمور إيجابية وأخرى سلبية في العام الماضي. وعلى سبيل المثال، تمّ تأجيل مهرجان الصقارة الدولي، الذي كان مقرراً تنظيمه مطلع سبتمبر 2020، حتى إشعار آخر، وذلك بسبب حالة عدم اليقين المُتعلّقة بإمكانية السفر بين الدول والحاجة إلى مزيد من التخطيط الدقيق لتنظيم حدث كبير مثل هذا المهرجان في ظلّ ظروف استثنائية. لكن ومن ناحية أخرى، سوف يتم عقد مؤتمر IAF / UNESCO "المجتمعات في قلب التراث الثقافي غير المادي - بناء القدرات من أجل مستقبل مُستدام للصقارة" وذلك ضمن فعاليات معرض أبوظبي الدولي للصيد والفروسية 2021، والذي يُنظّمه نادي صقاري الإمارات.

نعزز باستمرار العلاقة الجيدة للاتحاد الدولي للصقارة مع لجنة التراث الثقافي غير المادي في منظمة اليونسكو، وهناك ملحقات مقترحة لقائمة البلدان التي تنضم حديثاً للاعتراف بالصقارة كتراث ثقافي غير مادي للإنسانية، سواء في القوائم الدولية أم الوطنية. لقد عملت العديد من الأندية بجد لتحقيق ذلك، ويسعدنا في الـ IAF مواصلة المساعدة في إنجاز كل هذه المهام؛ نحن نفخر بأننا نمتلك فريق عمل ذي كفاءة عالية.



ADIHEX هو أكبر معرض تجاري في العالم مُخصص بقطاعات الصقارة والصيد والفروسية والتراث الثقافي عموماً. وما زلنا نخطط لعقد مؤتمر اليونسكو ضمن فعاليات هذا الحدث الفريد، ولكن إذا تبين لنا أنّ ذلك غير ممكن فيما لو استمرت الظروف التي تحول دون ذلك، فسوف يكون نقوم بتنظيم المؤتمر عبر الإنترنت، وعلى كل حال سيبقى هذا الخيار متاحاً.

في اجتماع مجلس أعضاء الـ IAF لعام 2020، تقرر قبول عرض نادي صقاري الإمارات لاستضافة اجتماع 2021 في أبوظبي، ليتم إقامته أيضاً خلال فعاليات معرض أبوظبي الدولي للصيد والفروسية، في أواخر سبتمبر. هذه الخطط لا تزال قائمة كما هي. فالمعارض باتت تُقام بالفعل في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، ولكن مع إرشادات صارمة. معايير استقبال الزوار الأجانب في الإمارات هي أن يتم تطعيمهم باللقاح ضد فيروس كورونا، وأن يتم اختبارهم قبل السفر ومرة أخرى عند الوصول للتأكد من عدم إصابتهم بالفيروس. وفي هذه الحالة فإن بإمكانهم الذهاب مباشرة لحضور المعارض والفعاليات بدون الحاجة لخضوعهم لحجر صحي. وفي حين أنه لا يمكن أن يكون هناك تأكيد تام، فإننا نعتد إلى حد كبير على قدرة الاتحاد الدولي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة لتنظيم اجتماع مجلس الأعضاء وضمان الحضور، والمشاركة في مؤتمر اليونسكو وفي فعاليات معرض أبوظبي الدولي للصيد والفروسية نفسه، نحن نستطيع ذلك ونأمل تحقيقه على أرض الواقع.

كافة أخبار وأنشطة الاتحاد الدولي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة، وكذلك فعاليات ونشاطات الأندية الوطنية التي نتلقاها، يتم إرسالها على نطاق واسع عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني المباشر (إلى المندوبين والأعضاء)، ويتم تضمينها كذلك في النشرات الإلكترونية الشهرية (ما يزيد عن 2000 مشترك في القائمة البريدية للاتحاد) وعبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، حيث تصل المنشورات بشكل منتظم إلى نحو 11000 متابع، وأحياناً تصل إلى ضعف هذا العدد. ويجب أن يُنسب الفضل في ذلك إلى ثلاث مجموعات عمل، هي: مجموعة الاتصال والعلاقات العامة، ومجموعة العمل النسائية، والفريق المعني بالتعليم، والذي يضم بدوره جيشاً من المترجمين المتطوعين، الذين يترجمون الآن منشوراتنا إلى جميع لغات العمل الست للأمم المتحدة، إضافة لـ 12 لغة أخرى مهمة للصقارين، وذلك بشكل منتظم.

تكثفت الأنشطة في مجموعات العمل الإقليمية هذا العام بشكل ملحوظ، وتطلب ذلك بذل الكثير من العمل من قبل فريق التقنيين. كما حدثت تطورات قانونية إيجابية في كل من أستراليا وكندا وأمريكا اللاتينية واليونان والصين، وتمت الإشارة لها جميعها في نشراتنا الإلكترونية.

ولقد أثمرت جهودنا هذا العام عن نتائج إيجابية ملحوظة فيما يتعلق بـ "اعتماد إجراءات سريعة لمنع حوادث الصعق الكهربائي للطيور". وقد تم إعداد هذه الوثيقة من قبل الـ IAF بالتعاون مع متخصصين من مؤسسة التمويل الدولية (مؤسسة البنك الدولي) والبنك الأوروبي للتنمية والتعمير وجهات أخرى. واستهدف ذلك غير المتخصصين، وخاصة الفاعلين في القطاع المالي الذين بإمكانهم اتخاذ القرارات والاستثمار في البنية التحتية للكهرباء. كما يواصل صندوق محمد بن زايد للمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة، مشروعه الرائد في منغوليا للحيلولة دون حدوث المزيد من حالات الصعق الكهربائي للطيور، وذلك بهدف منع استمرار الانخفاض في أعداد الصقور في آسيا الوسطى. وكل ذلك يثبت أن الصقارين هم رواد الجهود العالمية ضد حوادث صعق الطيور بالكهرباء.

كان الاتحاد الدولي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة، نشطاً في CMS COP13 في الهند، وقد تحدث مسؤول إدارة الصون "يانوش سيليكس" على هامش فعالية Saker GAP الذي نظمته CMS Raptors MoU، وقام بالعديد من إجراءات التدخل لمنع حدوث عقبات لممارسة الصقارة. ولقد شاركنا في تنظيم ورشة عمل وطنية لحماية الطيور الجارحة في باكستان، ونجم عن ذلك تقنين قانوني للصقارة في إحدى المقاطعات هناك على الأقل. أخيراً، ومن خلال مجموعة عمل الصون، يستمر العمل على إطلاق بوابة الصون والحفظ الخاصة بـ IAF، والتي ستوحد جميع جهودنا ومواردنا إلكترونياً. بات موقع FalCoNet.org موجوداً بالفعل على الإنترنت، لكنه لا يزال قيد الإنشاء. وهذا العام، كانت هناك بعض المشاريع المميزة التي أدارها الصقارون والاتحاد الدولي للصقارة، أو من خلال مساعدتهم، في كل من باكستان والمغرب والدول التي تنتشر فيها الصقور.

إنّ تطوّر أندية الصقارة يتواصل نحو الأمام، حيث قامت الأندية الوطنية في كل من أمريكا اللاتينية وشمال إفريقيا بتأسيس أطرها وكوادرها والعمل مع حكوماتها كهيئات معترف بها، وبالتعاون مع مشاريع ذوي الاهتمام. ولقد كان من دواعي سروري في وقت سابق من هذا العام، أن أتقدم بالشكر والتهنئة نيابة عن الاتحاد الدولي للصقارة والمحافظة على الطيور الجارحة، لصاحب السمو الملكي الأمير محمد بن سلمان، ولي عهد المملكة العربية السعودية، وسمو الأمير عبد العزيز بن نايف، رئيس نادي الصقور السعودي، على الجهود الكبيرة التي تمّ بذلها للحفاظ على الصقارة، ومنها إطلاق العديد من المشاريع المهمة في مجال صون الصقارة، بما في ذلك إعادة إطلاق الصقور البرية والمحلية إلى بيئاتها في السعودية، للمرة الأولى. أما المشروع الثاني فقد ركّز على إعادة تأهيل وإطلاق صقور الشاهين والحر عبر طرق هجرتها في كافة أنحاء قارة آسيا. ويُنظر إلى هذه المشاريع على أنها تُساهم في الحفاظ على التراث الثقافي، وسوف يتم الاستفادة من البيانات التي يتم جمعها بشكل كبير في جهود البحث العلمي ذات الصلة بهذه الصقور.

في أوروبا، يواصل نادي الصقارين النرويجي تحقيق نجاح تلو آخر، كما وتسعى الأندية الأخرى في منطقة الشمال الأوروبي جاهدة لتحقيق نجاحات النادي الدنماركي. لكن لسوء الحظ، هناك أخبار سلبية قادمة من أجزاء أخرى من أوروبا، إذ لا يزال اتحاد الـ IAF يجد صعوبة في الحصول على البيانات غير الصحيحة والإشارات السلبية حول الصقارة، لتتم إزالتها من وثائق الاتحاد الأوروبي الرسمية، وذلك على الرغم من أن الدكتور Keiya Nakajima، نائب الرئيس عن منطقة آسيا، قد حقق نجاحًا في الحصول على بيانات غير صحيحة تمّ تحديدها وسحبها من وثيقة نشرتها مجلة "Avocetta"، وهي مجلة علم الطيور المرموقة. أما في اسكتلندا، فسوف يؤثر حظر صيد الأرنب الجبلي بشكل خطير على ممارسة الصيد بالصقور هناك، ولذلك يعمل الـ IAF مع مندوبينا في المملكة المتحدة ومع NaturScot، الوكالة الحكومية الأسكتلندية المسؤولة عن ترخيص أنشطة الحياة البرية، لإيجاد حل وسط يُساهم في مواصلة ممارسة الصقارة.

وإذا ما انتقلنا إلى إسبانيا، نجد أنّ هناك مُعارضة لتربية الطيور الجارحة وتصديرها، من قبل تكتل حكومي رفيع المستوى معني بحقوق الحيوان. نعلم أنّ إسبانيا هي الدولة التي تُصدّر أكبر عدد من الصقور المكاثرية في الأسر في العالم، وبشكل خاص إلى دول شبه الجزيرة العربية التي تشتري كل عام حوالي 3000 صقر من إسبانيا، وذلك من الطيور التي يتم إكثارها في الأسر، والتي لا يتم بالتأكيد صيدها في البرية وإخراجها من بيئتها الطبيعية. ويتم فحص تلك الصقور ومراقبتها من قبل وزارة الصناعة والتجارة هناك، التي تُشرف بدورها على السلطة الإدارية لـ CITES، اتفاقية التجارة الدولية في الأنواع المهددة بالانقراض. وفي الحقيقة تُعدّ هذه التجارة في الصقور المكاثرية في الأسر والمُرخصة قانوناً أهم أداة في مكافحة الصيد غير القانوني والاتجار غير المشروع بالصقور البرية. وتجدر الإشارة أنّه في بعض البلدان، التي كان فيها استخدام الطيور البرية يطغى على ممارسة الصقارة بشدّة، أصبح من غير القانوني فيها الآن امتلاك أي صقر من البرية، فلقد جعلت القيم الاجتماعية الحديثة هذا الأمر غير مقبول. ويُفضّل الصقارون الآن سلالات مكاثرية في الأسر من قبل مزارع ومُربين ذوي سمعة طيبة.





وبهدف مُساعدة مالكي مزارع ومراكز إكثار الصقور في الأسر والعاملين في تجارتها في مختلف دول العالم، والذين عانوا من تأثير الوباء والأزمة الصحية على أعمالهم واستمرارية مشاريعهم، فإن نادي صقاري الإمارات سوف يُنظّم من جديد مزاد الصقور المُكاثرة في الأسر، والذي أقيم للمرّة الأولى في دورة العام 2018، وذلك حتى يتمكن المُنتجون والتجار من بيع مخزونهم من تلك الصقور خلال فعاليات الدورة القادمة من معرض أبوظبي الدولي للصيد والفروسية التي تنطلق في نهاية سبتمبر القادم، حيث ستقدّم إدارة المعرض كلّ مساعدة ممكنة لمُربي الصقور الذين يرغبون بإحضار طيورهم للحدث للمشاركة في المزاد.



وتجدر الإشارة إلى أن الـ IAF هو اتحاد لأندية الصقارة والمنظمات ذات الصلة برياضة الصيد بالصقور، ونحن نستخدم المعرفة والخبرة المكتسبة في العديد من الدول الأعضاء بهدف مساعدة البلدان التي تواجه صعوبات وعقبات. ومع ذلك، فإنّه لا يمكننا التعامل مع القضايا المحلية من دون أن نطلب منّا ذلك منظمات الأندية الوطنية التابعة للاتحاد الدولي للصقارة في تلك الدول، والتي يتم تخصيص كافة إمكانيات وقدرات الاتحاد لها. بشكل اعتيادي، كان يتم تحديث تفاصيل العضوية في الاتحاد خلال الاجتماع السنوي لمجلس المندوبين، حيث يمكن تثبيت واعتماد التعبيرات في أسماء المندوبين والعناوين وأرقام التواصل، وما إلى ذلك بشكل شخصي. لكن لم نتمكن من القيام بذلك في عام 2020، حيث تمّ عقد الاجتماع عبر الإنترنت. تقوم الأمانة العامة للاتحاد والمُشرف الإداري حالياً بمراجعة تفاصيل العضوية، وتحديث بيانات المندوبين عن طريق التواصل معهم بالبريد الإلكتروني.



في الختام، نودّ الإشارة إلى أنّ النسخة القادمة من معرض أبوظبي الدولي للصيد والفروسية، تنزامن مع الاحتفالات الكبرى التي تُطلقها دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة بمناسبة مرور خمسين عاماً على تأسيسها، حيث يُنظّم النادي الدورة الأضخم في تاريخ المعرض، والتي تُقام على مدى 7 أيام للمرّة الأولى، وذلك خلال الفترة من 27 سبتمبر ولغاية 3 أكتوبر 2021.



وسوف يكون من دواعي سرورنا، ونحن نتشارك سويّة فرحة الخروج من أزمة الجائحة، أن نتواجدوا معنا في الدورة الجديدة (أبوظبي 2021)، وهو ما يُمثّل قيمة إضافية لعالم الصقارة والصيد والتراث، ويُساهم في ضمان نجاح الحدث وتطوّره المُستمر، فأهلاً ومرحباً بكم، في دار زايد.



أخيراً، أودّ أن أعبر عن شكري وتقديري لجميع قادة مجموعات عمل الـ IAF وكافة الأعضاء والمندوبين الذين يعملون بجد من أجل تعزيز ممارسة الصقارة وتحقيق رسالة الاتحاد وأهدافه. ونحن نفخر بأنّ أكبر ثروة نمتلكها هي قوة وكفاءة ومهارة المتطوعين لدينا، فشكراً لكم جميعاً.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

By H.E. Majed Ali Al Mansouri

Delegates, Club Representatives and Friends of IAF,

This year has been the most difficult of my presidency so far. All the world has experienced some form of lockdown due to the Covid19 pandemic. Some restrictions have been severe for over a year, some less so. The enthusiasm that unites us all, our falconry, has continued to a lesser degree in many countries, with social distancing and other sanitary measures in place. What has suffered most are our international social events and our ability to show hospitality to each other. With the roll-out of vaccines and plans to open international travel, we hope to see the end of this sad year very soon.

Life has continued, as has the IAF's work, and we have all become familiar with technology enabling conferences, workshops and chats to continue in a face-to-face way, even if we are continents away from each other in different time-zones. IAF has member organisations in all time-zones but three.

In November 2020, we held our IAF Council of Delegates Meeting by Zoom, attended by 75 delegates and club representatives, which would have been considered a large number in a normal physical meeting. It is encouraging to see such enthusiasm. The efficacy of these new technologies meant that we could also vote electronically, and I am happy to congratulate Adrian Reuter from Mexico, unanimously voted IAF Vice-president for Latin America and the Caribbean. We have used Zoom many times since for regional and specialist working group meetings, for progress on the Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Museum of International Falconry and for the excellent series of fortnightly "Sharing the Knowledge" talks developed by Tony James and the Cultural Working Group, which are regularly achieving audiences of over 70.

There have been both good and bad things happening in the past year, for example the International Festival of Falconry, scheduled for early September,



has been postponed until further notice, due to the uncertainty over international travel and the need for stringent planning so far ahead of such a big event. On the other hand, we are still planning for an IAF/ UNESCO Conference, "Communities at the Heart of Intangible Cultural Heritage – capacity building for a sustainable future for falconry", to go ahead as part of the 2021 ADIHEX Exhibition, the largest trade exhibition in the world for falconry, hunting & equestrianism. If it turns out that it isn't possible, then we will in any case have an online option.

IAF's relationship with the UNESCO ICH continues to be good, and there are proposed extensions to the list of countries that recognise falconry as ICH, both the international and national listings. Many clubs have



worked very hard towards this. IAF is happy to continue to help with all of this work; we have an excellent team.

At our 2020 Council of Delegates Meeting, it was decided to accept the *Emirates Falconers' Club's* offer to host our 2021 Meeting in Abu Dhabi, also at ADIHEX, in late September. These plans are still in place. Exhibitions are already being staged in the UAE with strict guidelines. Requirements for foreign visitors to the UAE are that they be vaccinated, are tested just before travelling and again on arrival. No quarantine is then needed to go to exhibitions. While there can be no certainty, we are very much counting on IAF's presence for the Council of Delegates Meeting, for the Conference and for ADIHEX itself. We can but hope.

All falconry news originating from the IAF, or passed on to us by national Delegations, is reported extensively by direct email (to delegates), in the monthly eBulletins (to a mailing list of almost 2,000) and in social media, where posts regularly reach 11,000, occasionally twice that number. Credit for this must go to three Working Groups: the Communications and PR Group, the Women's Working Group and the Education Working Group, which includes the army of volunteer translators who now translate our publications into all six United Nations working languages, plus another 12 languages which are regularly important to falconers.

Activities in the Regional Working Groups have been intense this year, usually involving a lot of work from the Legalisation Team. There have been positive legal developments in Australia, Canada, Latin America, Greece and China, all notified in our eBulletins.

Our commitment to conservation has paid off this year with recognition of the "Quick Guidance Preventing Electrocution in Birds". We prepared this document in cooperation with specialists from the International Finance Corporation (World Bank Institution), the European Bank for Development and Reconstruction and others. It is aimed at non-specialists, especially from the financial sector, who

make decisions and invest in electricity infrastructure. The Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Fund continues its project in Mongolia on stopping bird electrocution, to prevent a further decline in Central Asia's saker population. All this proves that falconers are the leaders in the global fight against bird electrocution.

IAF was active in CMS COP13 in India: Conservation Officer Janusz Sielicki spoke at the Saker GAP side event organised by CMS Raptors MoU and made several interventions to prevent problems for falconry. We co-organised a National Birds of Prey Conservation Workshop in Pakistan resulting in favourable legalisation for falconry in at least one of the provinces. Finally, from the Conservation WG, the work on IAF's Conservation Portal, which will unify all our online resources, is continuing. FalCoNet.org is already online, but still under construction. This year there have been some excellent IAF and falconer-run or assisted projects in Pakistan, Morocco and in the saker range states.

Club development has been moving forward, with national clubs in both Latin America and North Africa establishing themselves and working with their governments as recognised bodies and in stakeholder projects. I had the pleasure earlier this year of expressing the IAF's thanks and congratulations to His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, and H.H. Prince Abdul Aziz bin Naif, Chairman of the *Saudi Falconry Club*, on their initiation of several projects, including the reintroduction of native Barbary and lanner falcons into Saudi Arabia; the first time such an effort has taken place. The second project focuses on the rehabilitation and release of peregrines and sakers onto their migration routes throughout Asia. These projects are seen as Saudi cultural heritage: data collected will greatly benefit scientific research into all these falcons.

In Europe, the *Norwegian Falconers' Club* goes from strength to strength and other clubs in the Nordic region are striving hard towards achieving the Danish Club's successes. Unfortunately, there is negative news

from elsewhere in Europe: IAF still finds it hard to have incorrect data and negative references to falconry removed from official EU documents, though Dr. Keiya Nakajima, VP for Asia, has successfully had incorrect data identified and withdrawn from a document published by *Avocetta*, a prestigious ornithological journal. A ban on hunting Scotland's mountain hares will gravely affect falconry there: IAF is working with our UK Members and with NaturScot, the Scottish government agency responsible for licencing wildlife activities, to find a compromise for falconry.

In Spain there is opposition to raptor breeding and export from a high-ranking animal-rightist government official. Spain is the country that exports the most hawks in the world; above all, to the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, which every year buy around 3,000 falcons from Spain. These are birds bred in captivity, not taken from the natural environment, and are inspected and controlled by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, which holds the administrative authority of CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. This trade in captive-bred, legally certificated falcons is the most important tool in the fight against illegal trapping and trading of wild-caught falcons. In some countries, former heavy users of wild-taken birds, it is now illegal to have one and modern social values have made this unacceptable. Citizens now prefer selected bloodlines from reputable breeders.

In order to assist breeders who have suffered during the pandemic, the *Emirates Falconers' Club* will repeat the falcon auction first held in 2018 and breeders will be able to sell their stock (only captive-bred) during ADIHEX. Every assistance will be given to breeders wishing to bring hawks.

It must be noted that IAF is a federation of falconry clubs and falconry related organisations and we use knowledge and expertise gained in many of these countries to assist countries in difficulty. However, we cannot act on national issues without being asked

by IAF national club organisations, to which all our resources are dedicated. Normally membership details are updated during the annual Council of Delegates Meeting, where changes in delegate, addresses, numbers, etc can be confirmed in person. This could not be done in 2020, as the meeting was online. The secretariat and Admin WG are currently reviewing membership details and updating delegates' particulars by email.

I would like to point out that the next edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) coincides with the big celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the United Arab Emirates and, for the first time in history, the *Emirates Falconers' Club* is organising the largest edition of ADIHEX, for a period of seven days from September 27th to October 3rd, 2021.

It will be our pleasure, as we share the joy of getting out of the pandemic crisis, to have you with us at ADIHEX 2021, which represents an additional value to the world of falconry, hunting and heritage, and contributes to ensuring the event's success and continuous development. Welcome to Dar Zayed.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude and recognition for all the leaders of the IAF working groups, their members and all the delegates who work so hard to promote falconry and to achieve the IAF's mission and goals. Our biggest asset is the strength, competence and skills of our volunteers, so thank you all.



Utah Hawking 2020/2021

By Arnaud Van Wettere

When I was asked, last year, to write an article for the IAF Journal, I was, at the time, flying an excellent gamehawk and had had several good years of hawking in a row with her. Sadly, the 2019-2020 falconry season ended with the loss of *Koryn*, my four times intermewed female peregrine. I therefore spent most of the 2020-2021 season training new falcons rather than hawking. Fortunately, my good friend Jeff Broadbent's passage

gyrfalcon delighted us with some great flights on ducks and grouse, which meant the season's outings were not only about training falcons.

In February 2020, *Koryn* hit a fence at the end of a stoop after a pheasant. She sustained a severe fracture of the left shoulder bones along with laceration of her pectoral muscles, and so she had to be euthanised. She had developed into an excellent falcon over the



years. In Utah, we can take peregrines either from the nest or up until the last day of August, under a special permit allocated by lottery. I had trapped her in August 2015 near my home in Northern Utah, during a small rainstorm. Jeff and I were about to set up a lure pole in the middle of a large open area when the storm moved in. We decided it was probably not the best idea to erect a 20 foot long pole during a lightning storm. We could see the newspaper headline: "Two falconers electrocuted while holding a pole in the middle of a field during a lightning storm."

Instead, we decided it would be safer to drive and scout around the area. Our decision was rewarded when we spotted a juvenile female peregrine on a pole. In spite of the rain, we trapped her using a harnessed pigeon. She rapidly became a dependable falcon, taking pitches ranging from 400 to 800 feet and occasionally flying around or above 1,000 feet. However, her footing was surprisingly poor. She caught many pheasants but would often release and lose them just before landing. I suspect that she must have had a bad experience sometime before I trapped her, as I have never

Author releasing his falcon.
Photo credit: Jeff Broadbent.





seen another hawk releasing their catch so often when landing. I speculated that she may have ended up in the water as a young bird, as she was trapped close to a large body of water. Her footing got better every year and she lost fewer and fewer birds. In her last season, she had become deadly and provided us with some great flights. I flew her mainly at sharp-tailed grouse and pheasant, but she took a fair number of ducks of various species along with a few grey partridge and sage grouse too.

Sharp-tailed grouse are my favourite quarry in my home area and are one of the most difficult grouse species to catch with a falcon in North America. They give off very little scent and therefore require a good pointing dog to find them. I use English setters as I like their personality and they have both the nose and the physical attributes needed to find gamebirds in the mountains where I hunt. I probably enjoy flying sharp-tailed grouse as they remind me so much of the Scottish red grouse, having a similar flight and the same cackling sound when they flush. I grew up in Belgium and began to practice falconry as a teenager, “imprinting” on grouse as a quarry at an early age. I was very lucky that my first falconry mentor, Charles

Martin, was incredibly generous and took me with him to Scotland for several seasons, before I moved to the USA. This experience led to my desire to hunt wild grouse using passage falcons over pointing dogs. Sharp-tailed grouse are a difficult quarry and it typically takes two to three years before a falcon becomes proficient at catching them with style. Unfortunately, all the time and effort that had gone into developing *Koryn* into an excellent grouse hawk were negated in a split second when she hit that fence. Finding suitable areas to fly large falcons has become more and more difficult over the years. With the increased demand for meat and with cattle prices rising, more cattle are being raised, more fences are being erected and more fallow lands are taken out for grazing. Of course, loss of habitat and quarry are big challenges for falconry worldwide.

While it was agonising to lose a good falcon, I soon had the opportunity to try to trap another peregrine in Utah, not long after losing *Koryn*. I wasn't interested in taking an eyass; my goal was to trap a falcon away from the eyrie after it first dispersed. In August, Jeff and I started to scout a number of areas to which we knew young peregrines tended to disperse. One morning, I was releasing young pigeons, training them to fly home but also to assess if any peregrines were in the area. We were watching the young birds climbing into the sky when my eyes caught the tail end of a stoop by a large falcon as she caught one of my pigeons. The falcon landed with her catch about 150 yards away in a dirt field. I gazed at the falcon through my binoculars; it was a juvenile female peregrine! My heart started racing. It was earlier in August than I had planned to trap a falcon, but this young peregrine knew what



she was doing. She must have been high in the sky above, as the end of her stoop was almost vertical and my pigeons never saw her coming. They only tried an evasive manoeuvre when she was less than 30 feet away. After taking a few seconds to get composed again, we sprang into action. Before going out trapping, we had made plans on how to proceed should the opportunity to trap a falcon arise. We had considered carefully the various situations that could occur, as there would be no time to waste once a falcon was spotted. Consequently, the truck was loaded with pigeons, pigeon harnesses, a noose carpet, a bal-chatri and a dho-gazza net.

Trapping peregrines in August is not easy. The falcons are not hungry like they are in winter and opportunities to find a young female peregrine in a location suitable for trapping are rare. While Utah has a good number of nesting peregrines, finding a juvenile female peregrine away from an eyrie in August is akin to looking for a needle in a haystack. We bumped the young falcon from her pigeon and offered a harnessed pigeon at the same time. She came right away to the pigeon and, after 30 to 40 passes at it, landed about ten yards away. She looked at the pigeon, surveyed all around her as well as the sky above, then walked to it and grabbed it. My heart was racing watching her approaching the pigeon and then plucking it. Jeff wanted me to move the truck to a different angle to get pictures of the falcon. He got a firm answer: "No, we are not moving until we are certain she is caught." Fifteen minutes later, we had her in our hands. She was in perfect plumage, in good body condition and

an average size female for Utah. Her trapping weight with a small crop was 950g.

Twenty-four hours post trapping she weighed 840g. After a day in a quiet place to give her a chance to settle and cast, I unhooded her in very dim light. She was a very bold peregrine. She bated away once after unhooding, then stood fiercely up on my fist and tried to launch herself at my face about fifteen times during the next fifteen minutes. I have had this happen before with prairie falcons but never with a wild peregrine. After fifteen minutes, she realised that I was offering her a nice pigeon breast and started to eat. Training progressed as usual except that, once outside, she went from jumping to the lure two feet away to flying fifty yards instantly to the lure in just six sessions. She was flown free for the first time four weeks post trapping. I was impatient to see how she would behave but the day of her introduction was disappointing. She left the fist to land just eight feet in front of me. When she took off, she circled me, flying very tight and low as I walked away from her. She behaved as though she was too hungry. Her weight was 755g at the time and her pectoral musculature was very good.

I began training her to mount up using pigeons, in the traditional manner, but it proved to be unsuccessful. Once a pigeon mounted and gained altitude above her, she gave up the chase. I then introduced her to the drone. She learned fast and soon she was easily flying to 1,000 to 1,500 feet to take the lure from it. The transition from the drone went well too. She stooped at the first pigeon I offered when she was climbing up to



Author with falcon. Photo credit: Jeff Broadbent.





it. Unfortunately, without the drone in the air, she did not want to climb high and instead she stayed at a pitch of about 150 feet. Trying her on pigeons again led to the same issue as before. As soon as a pigeon flew above her, she stopped chasing it. This made it very difficult to reward her as she was not taking a decent pitch. I tried to show her the drone out of position, as described by Scott Larsen ("perfect pigeon" technique) but she then refused to fly to the drone. She wanted pigeons now which was not surprising for a wild falcon. As nothing seemed to make her take a pitch, I decided to hunt her and see if this would help. Hunting her did improve the pitch a little but only from 150 feet up to 200-250 feet, and she was very inconsistent. She was aggressive on gamebirds and chased pheasants and ducks for long distances but failure at tail chasing did not trigger her to increase her pitch.

She was a little unusual for a peregrine as, over the season, she chased several ducks into the water. When she caught her first duck, she grabbed it in flight, landed on the ice covering part of the pond and then slid into the water with it. She held on to the drake mallard and

swam to the edge of the pond like a goshawk. Another day, she went into the water chasing a mallard that had turned back to the pond after she had missed it in the stoop. I thought that I had misjudged her weight and that she must have been very hungry, too hungry, for her to dive into the water after a duck. However, she did this several times at various weights. Even when flown at trapping weight, 840 g, and being obviously not very hungry when fed at home on rest days, she still ended up in the water if the duck flew back to a pond or a ditch after the flush. I had contemplated naming her *Sky* as she had come out of the heavens to catch a pigeon on the day I trapped her, but her low pitch and tendency to go fishing after ducks led me to name her *Nimue* (after the Arthurian Lady of the Lake).

Unfortunately, nothing I tried stimulated her to take a higher pitch. Now that the season has ended in mid-March, she has not made enough progress for me to consider keeping her. She is fast, chases all gamebirds and has good footing. She is also very dependable, tame and easy to take care of, but she does not have that strong drive to fly high and be the kind of gamehawk that is fun to watch. She could probably be a good falcon for pursuit flights from the fist but I do not have enough crows or other quarry around here to consider such flights. I released *Nimue* in early April, in the very field where I had trapped her seven months earlier. Although she did not develop into a good falcon for waiting on flights, I still enjoyed the season and the experience of trapping and training this peregrine. In addition to their skills and independence, I love passage hawks as each has something different to show you. You do not know what they have already learned in the wild





before you trap them, and so when one does not adapt well to captivity or develop to the falconer's satisfaction, it can be released back into the wild.

I like to fly one large falcon and one merlin each season and had planned to trap a merlin to fly during the winter. I have a weak spot for passage merlins and somehow end up flying one most years. In November however, as *Nimue* was not developing as expected, I decided to get a prairie falcon instead. I had the opportunity to take on a nice female prairie falcon during the Thanksgiving week vacation. She was trapped next to a field where ducks came in to feed and had one broken primary and deck feather when caught. The broken feathers may have been a sign that she had been going after ducks or larger prey? For the area where I live, she was at the higher end of the average size for prairie falcons, weighing 800g empty, twenty-four hours after capture. She was in good body condition but not very fat. Prairie falcons accumulate a lot of body fat during the winter and their winter trapping weight may not be a good indication of their flying weight later. This prairie was bold. She stood on the fist, bating only a couple of times per session for the first few days. She ate twenty-four hours post capture, and her taming went well, with steady progress every day. After five weeks, she was on the wing and flew at 720g. From the start, she flew with a good strong wing beat, climbing up into the sky during her first flights. I trained her using pigeons and, by January, she was regularly taking a pitch of 300 to 400 feet. As expected from a recently trapped passage bird, she tended to take off after birds passing in the distance, or go hunting on her own, if I did not serve her rapidly but she showed a real desire to fly high and mount up into the sky. It was all very different to my experience with *Nimue*! She had no hesitation going after drake mallards

and dispatched them like she had done this before. I flew her at sage grouse twice in February. She hit one grouse hard and chased the others vigorously. These were good signs as not all prairie falcons will go after large ducks or sage grouse. Although she was a little uncontrolled and often out of position, her pitch improved over time and what I saw of her told me she was a keeper. You can centre in a falcon that ranges too far out but you cannot instil the desire to fly high and wide. I spent the last week of the season flying sharp-tailed grouse. Although she did not catch one, she showed a lot of promise. She did not waste any energy stooping at grouse that flushed when she was out of position; she stooped only when she had a real chance. She did succeed in hitting two grouse and came very close to two others, but sharp-tailed grouse are very fast and are masters at a last-second, rolling, escape manoeuvre that tricks a falcon, especially an inexperienced one. As I write these lines, the season is over and the prairie falcon is now up for the moult. Flying our native grouse with a native falcon is the type of falconry I enjoy most. You get to learn all about the behaviour, the habits and the escape techniques grouse use against their natural predators. I hope for a quick moult so that I will be able to fly her at the easier October grouse early next season, to build up her confidence.



Photo credit: Steve Chindgren.

ARNAUD
VAN WETTERE

Arnaud Van Wettere is a professor of veterinary pathology with a special interest in avian and wildlife diseases, and conservation. He started practicing falconry as a teenager in Belgium. Later, he moved to the USA and completed a residency in avian medicine at *The Raptor Centre* at the *University of Minnesota*. He took up a residency in anatomic pathology, completing a Ph.D. in comparative biomedical sciences at *North Carolina State University*. Over the past 32 years, he has had the opportunity of flying a number of different hawks, both in the USA and Europe, including red-tailed hawks, goshawks, Harris' hawks, a European sparrowhawk, a sharp-shinned hawk, an American kestrel and a number of merlins, prairie falcons and peregrines. He is now working at *Utah State University*, where he teaches at the veterinary school. He provides pathology support to researchers and veterinary diagnostic services at the *Utah State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory*. Living in the American West allows him to pursue his passion for falconry while pursuing a rewarding career in veterinary pathology.

All photos are by author, unless mentioned otherwise.





Falconry, Hawking and Hawks; an Apologia

By David Horobin

When considering multiple texts by authors from varied backgrounds on a subject so internationally diverse as falconry, it is inevitable that one encounters some divergences in terminology and tradition which can seem hard to reconcile at times. However, given that the *Journal* is published, and has been proofread in, British English, we have, of necessity, followed British falconry's traditional terminology, developed over the centuries.

Originally, to our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, any trained species was simply a hawk – whether goshawk, sparrowhawk or even peregrine. Consequently, one went hawking with all species and for all quarry: *hawking to the river* was the flight at waterfowl, even when this flight developed to predominantly utilise high-flying falcons. Such falcons were still *hawks for the river* whilst their modern counterparts flown in the waiting on style are *grouse hawks* or *partridge hawks*.

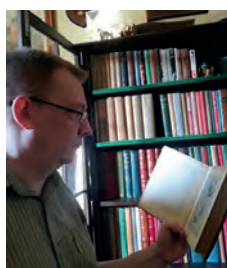
The Norman conquest of Britain led to a great flowering of the sport's vocabulary. Each species had its own specific names for female and male hawks – respectively, the lanner and *lanneret*, the merlin and her *jack*, the gyrfalcon and *gyrkin*. The term *falcon* specifically designated the female of what we now know as the peregrine, her male was the *tiercel* whilst the male goshawk became the 'tiercel goshawk'. Terms linked to hawks' age and origin are still used – *eyass*, *gentle*, *passager* and *haggard* – and even each main flight feather or digit had its own specific name in Norman-French. Whilst some early English sources draw distinctions between 'hawkers' and 'falconers' according to what they flew, the Normans also made British falconry somewhat less democratic – with new ownership of land only the powerful had the right to hunt and hawk and, consequently, falconry terminology

became a symbol of exclusivity. Indeed mere knowledge of it became a sign of status, and since those with social and economic power had the access to land and resources required for flying falcons – often flown from horseback at high-flying quarry – the sport itself eventually became known as falconry.

As falconry's social and cultural significance evolved, falcons became the exclusive domain of the aristocrat and hawks came to take on lesser status, though as my own research has shown, this is often based on a false consciousness in literary symbolism. This ultimately influenced the practice of later generations of falconers after the sport's popularity waned in Britain in the mid-seventeenth century, and still pervades external views of falconry today.

Over time, many falconry terms and wider concepts became fully incorporated into everyday English language. We "*cadge* a lift", or describe people being "hoodwinked" or "boozing" (this latter from a Dutch term corrupted in English to *bousing*). The sport's continuity in Britain also influenced hawking further afield in countries from which it had been either virtually lost, like Hungary, or had never previously been practised. However, whilst English terms have an almost embarrassingly wide currency in global falconry today, it is interesting to consider the wider cultural interchange that gave us these terms. Most came from our nearest neighbours, French and Dutch falconers, yet of course later terms came from India and the East in the era of Empires. Perhaps an overly dominant language in falconry, yes, but one reflecting the truly global heritage our sport has.

Against this rich backdrop and heritage, with terms and concepts from so many sources, we use the following conventions: **falconry** is the overall cultural phenomenon that encompasses all aspects of manning, training and hunting with trained birds of prey, formally termed **hawks** irrespective of species. However, the actual pursuit of quarry is **hawking** – whether that be rook hawking with peregrines or rabbit hawking with the goshawk. Thus, as practitioners of falconry, we go hawking with trained hawks.



DAVID
HOROBIN

David Horobin is a Joint Director of the *British Archives of Falconry*, author of *Falconry in Literature* (2004), *Latham's Falconry: A Commentary* (2012), 'The Pen and the Peregrine: Literary influences on the development of British Falconry', published in Grimm, O. and Gersmann, K.H. (ed.) *Raptor and Human* (2018) and co-author with Paul Beecroft of *We Were Falconers II* (2020). He has also contributed to, edited and proofread numerous titles and articles on all aspects of hawking.

Hardships of Falconry in Kuwait

By Majed Al-Daweesh

In Kuwait, if you're not a falconer, a member of your family or one of your friends is: that's how popular the sport is. Seeing a falconer in Kuwait is not something to turn one's head. The season starts with the Suhail Star—a star you can see high in the southern sky at night, at the beginning of September. The breeze begins to cool, and the ground temperature is cool enough for the birds to start training and hunting.

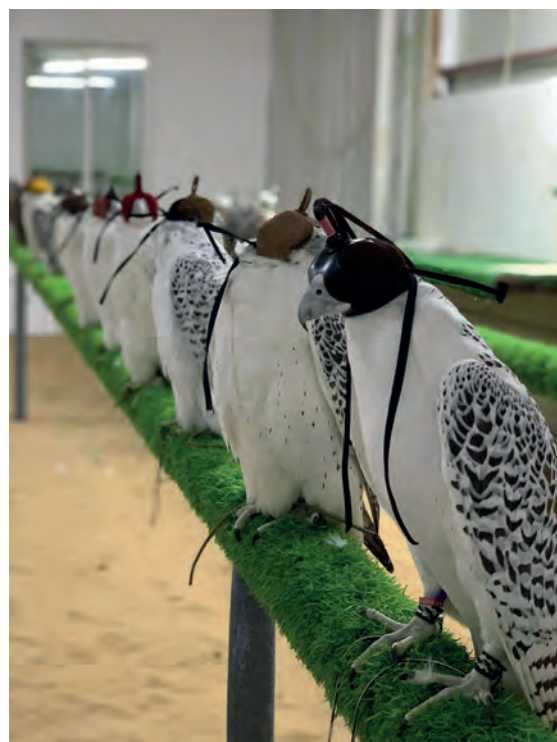
At this time, the falconers start taking their hawks from the *marbaht* (mews)—or should I call it the “falcon spa?” This is the place where falconers keep their hawks during the off-season in the summer. During the off-season, the falcons moult and are blessed with a set of new feathers. This period of time determines each hawk's forthcoming next season. Unfortunately, some birds don't experience a clean moult and come up short on good quality feathers. While this can be caused by diseases, often it's caused by bad conditions in the *marbaht*. Consequently, choosing the right *marbaht* is very important.

Each type of hawk – the *hurr* (saker), peregrine and the gyr x peregrine – has its own *marbaht*, so they don't kill each other. The *marbaht*, designed like a big bunker, simulates their natural environment and they are able to fly free in it. In the old days, hawks were merely tied to their perches during the summer months but, over time, it was realised this affected their performance and susceptibility to injury.

It costs me 180 KWD (\$576 USD) for each hawk for the entire moulting season. I have two medium-sized gyr x peregrines. The training starts the day

after moulting by feeding them on the glove, then we progress to feeding them from drones, or fixed-wing model planes, whilst they are flying. The old-style lures are not used very much anymore, but drones and planes speed up their performance significantly. In the past, falcons were commonly lost but now, with tracking systems, it's nearly impossible to lose them.

In Kuwait, hunting is very rare now due to the damaged environment, misuse of public land and fracking of the soil, which has caused the natural food





supply of migrating birds to diminish. Migrating birds used to come to the Arabian peninsula from the north and middle of Asia during the winter. They came for the warmer weather and for breeding and laying their eggs, then would return at the beginning of the summer. Nowadays, we don't see many migrating birds in the desert. Camels, sheep and guns haven't left much for the falcons to hunt.

It's distressing to see the ecosystem disturbed like this. It's been happening for decades. Falconry made me interested in these environmental issues, and I feel sad when I see too many birds being shot by people hunting with guns. Think of the pictures you see of one hunter who has shot 100 or more birds. Many birds have also been driven away by new development projects on the land where I used to hunt with the falcons.

Travelling with the falcons to other countries in search of quarry has become an option, but an expensive one. It's also stressful because of the extensive paperwork, customs, airline procedures and regulations. Last season, we didn't go far, even as tourists, because of the pandemic. Most of our time was spent training with drones, with pigeons or with birds like the houbara and *kairowan*. Yes – one can do that here. Some people breed or import and sell them to desperate falconers like me. They're expensive, but I have few other options. The costs range from \$200 to \$1,000, but we do this so the falcons do not forget what they have to hunt.

There are times I think about settling in another country where there is more available quarry for a couple of years in an effort to satisfy my desire to take quarry with my hawks. Some plans can be delayed to the off-season: it is possible.



The House of Grouse

Whilst watching video clips from falconers all over the world, I kept going back to videos by one particular falconer: Steve Chindgren. He's an American, taking big grouse in a beautiful wild location, in a different way from us. We always train our hawks to directly pursue their quarry, horizontally, but he was flying the falcons high in the sky whilst he used dogs to drive out the grouse from their hiding places on the ground. Once in the air, the falcons would stoop down to catch them. I think this is the way of falconry in the western world. I looked for him on social media platforms to ask if I could hunt with him. He has a show in Salt Lake City Zoo, so I sent him a message and offered

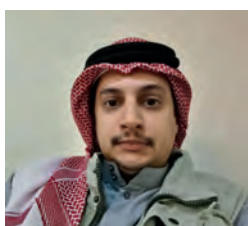


him money to go with him. He refused and insisted I go as a guest to the House of Grouse, as he calls it, in Sweetwater County, Wyoming. He was very generous during my stay and let me handle one of his hawks called *Badger*, a black gyr x peregrine. It was a great week. I learned a lot and we caught grouse every day. It was a falconer's dream!

The little houbara in Azerbaijan

The little houbara (*Tetrax tetrax*) here was very fast, and my two gyr x peregrines could not catch them, despite training them to develop their speed and height. I had sold my saker and bought the gyr x peregrines especially for this trip but . . . it didn't work! There were plenty of ducks and hares caught, but no luck catching houbara.

Hunting trips in Azerbaijan are organised by special companies providing license, accommodation, transportation and logistics. There are not many places to hunt there. It was a very difficult terrain for falconers, as there are many hills, rivers and channels. It's not the flat land we prefer but, the good news is, we ate what we caught every day.



MAJED
AL-DAWEESH

I am a marine engineer employed by the government environmental authority. I have been practicing falconry on and off since youth but, in the last six years, have been constantly active with falconry. I have flown sakers, peregrines and gyr x peregrines, and have been hawking in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Azerbaijan and the United States. I have also taken part in luring contests in Kuwait.

The origin and history of falconry.

The present status of research based on two falconry books from Germany (2018, 2020)

By Karl-Heinz Gersmann and Oliver Grimm



Second falconry book from Germany, published in 2020.



Oliver Grimm.



Karl-Heinz Gersmann.

The cooperation between both authors – one a highly experienced falconer and collector of historical falconry books, the other an archaeologist interested in premodern hunting – goes back six years. From this collaboration, a plan emerged to study falconry and its history by both falconers and scientists. The project would span the width of the original falconry world, from Western Europe and Northern Africa in the west to Japan in the east, and date back approximately 2,500 years to the appearance of the very first evidence of falconry in the Eurasian steppe.

The project's initial scope was based on the results of a conference, hosted in 2014 by *The Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology* (ZBSA) in

Schleswig, Germany, Oliver Grimm's home base. Thereafter, a more extensive academic publication evolved, *Raptor and human*, which appeared in 2018. It contains some 100 papers by falconers and scientists covering approximately 2,000 pages and describes falconry's present status as well as worthwhile areas for future research.

A second project, a further investigation of falconry images and similar motifs, had its basis in a 2018 conference hosted by *New York University Abu Dhabi* (NYUAD UAE). The ensuing book, *Raptor on the fist* (2020), was co-edited by art historian Anne-Lise Tropato (NYUAD) and contains some 50 academic papers covering around 1,000 pages. The authors felt the need for a critical reading and interpretation of assumed falconry images: research shows that ancient images of man and bird together do not necessarily

represent falconry. A classic case is that of coins depicting the Greek god Zeus with an eagle on his fist which should be regarded as a representation of divinity or as his servant or messenger. A series of similar cases have emerged; images initially implying falconry that, after further analysis, prove to be something else. In this respect, we refer to motifs from Syria and Iraq (Mesopotamia) and Turkey (Hittite), 4,000 years old or more and unrelated to falconry.

Let us now have a closer look at falconry's origins and early history as shown in both books. In early pre-falconry times, clear symbolism was attached to birds'



HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.



Early Islamic falconer on horseback, stucco, found in a seat of power excavated in Syria. Drawing by Lars Foged Thomsen, after a template.



Falconer on horseback, grave wall painting from the Chinese Han Dynasty, 3rd to 5th centuries CE. Drawing by Lars Foged Thomsen, after a template.



images while, in more recent times, symbolism was equally attributed to hawking. Multiple inventions of falconry cannot be excluded, but some evidence points towards the Eurasian steppe as one of several places, or *the* place, of origin. There, falconry, mostly with golden eagles, was quite widespread, providing fox skins and protecting herds against wolves. This kind of hunting might in fact date back several millennia. Chinese falconry is almost 2,000 years old, while hunting with hawks in Europe, North Africa, Arabia, Persia, Korea and Japan is more or less 1,500 years old. There are indications that knowledge of falconry was transmitted by mounted nomads from the steppe. However, during this transfer, falconry went through a fundamental change when the upper classes laid their hands on it.

Both books from Germany had different supporters. We simply cannot thank all falconers involved enough for their help in making photographs and articles available. This includes Frits Kleyn for his precious thoughts and suggestions. In addition, we feel indebted to the ZBSA and NYUAD for their assistance. We are equally grateful to the falconry organisations¹ that sponsored the first conference in 2014 and the subsequent book in 2018.

When it comes to the second meeting at NYUAD in 2018 and the subsequent publication in 2020, we are grateful for the generous financial support from

the *International Fund for Houbara Conservation* and the *Emirates Falconers' Club* without whom neither conference nor book could have been realised. This support reflects an interest in falconry and its history that goes back to His Highness the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan who organised the first international falconry conference that took place in 1976 in Abu Dhabi. Bringing together falconers and scientists from far and wide, this conference contributed substantially to a growing awareness of falconry as a cultural heritage, eventually leading to its inscription on *UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. Sheikh Zayed's commitment is still being felt today as both books from Germany have a foreword by his son, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.



Zeus with eagle on the fist, coin, fourth century BCE. Drawing by Lars Foged Thomsen, after a template.

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¹ Sponsors of the first conference (2014) and subsequent publication (2018)

The Archives of Falconry (USA), *L'Association Nationale des Fauconniers et Autoursiers Français* (ANFA, France), *International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation* (CIC), *Deutscher Falkenorden* (DFO, Germany), *Emirates Falconers' Club* (UAE), *European Foundation for Falconry* (EFF), *Hagedoorn Stichting* (the Netherlands), *The Falconry Heritage Trust* (FHT, Wales), *The International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey* (IAF, Belgium), *International Fund for Houbara Conservation* (IFHC, UAE), *Japanese Falconiformes Center* (JFC, Japan), *Club Mariae Burgundiae* (Belgium), *Marshall GPS* (USA), *Nederlands Valkeniersverbond "Adriaan Mollen"* (the Netherlands), *North American Falconers' Association* (NAFA, USA), *Orden Deutscher Falkoniere* (ODE, Germany) and *The Peregrine Fund* (USA)



The Drawing of *Kim*

By *Julia Kramer*

Last year a good friend of mine sent me a couple of photos of his newly acquired gyr x Barbary from a Spanish breeder; a beautiful hawk which I knew would be a joy to draw. We picked one of the reference photos which were taken on the day the bird was freshly caught up from the aviary, still nervous and hooded for the first time. A 2020 male gyr x Barbary, currently flying at 760g, the falconer's aim for him is duck hawking. So far, training to the drone has proven very effective and he is gaining great heights, getting increasingly confident and bonding well with the falconer. The hawk, named *Kim*, is very active, agile and a pure joy to watch and work with. In fact, the falconer told me that, character-wise, *Kim* is calm, very much attached to his human companion and, in short, the nicest and greatest hawk he has ever flown.

I tried to capture the essence, dreams and hopes of the beginning of a new falconry partnership and journey in my drawing. The reference photos I received were full of energy and emotions, which *Kim* certainly conveys. The medium I mostly use is coloured pencil, preferring a mix of Faber Castell Polychromos, Prismacolor and Caran d'Ache Luminance. Prismacolor and Luminance have a softer core with rich colours, therefore making colour-blending easy.





The Polychromos, on the other hand, are harder and let me add more defined detail. I recently discovered Clairefontaine Pastelmat paper which was originally designed to work with pastel, though is a joy to draw on with coloured pencils. One is able to have multiple layers of colours, therefore adding depth and vibrancy. Another advantage is that one can work light over dark areas, which makes adding highlights a whole lot easier. I usually start by tracing the layout, ensuring that the anatomy is perfect and absolutely correct. Without achieving this, the drawing will always be missing accuracy and never look like the reference in question. Next, I start layering the dark areas first without adding too many lines around feathers. If I need softer parts, I try to blend them with lighter colours and special blending pencils. Simple cotton buds may help as well.

When drawing, I always put my full attention and concentration into the piece. Only by doing so am I able to transfer emotions into my drawings. Self-taught, I never attended art school and thus have my own techniques when drawing. Capturing the character and essence of each and every subject is my own set goal. I truly want my artwork to be alive, to not just have a picture hanging on a wall, but a special memory which sparks with the essence of the bird.



Photo by Steven Lea

JULIA KRAMER
juliakramer19@gmail.com

Aged, eight, I became totally awestruck by falconry. After seeing a bird of prey display, my biggest wish was to have my own hawk one day. Thanks to my parents, I had the opportunity to work and help falconers and then, at the age of 15 in 2007, I gained my falconer's and hunter's licenses. For several years I hawked with my own goshawk and, since then, have had opportunities to fly and hunt with peregrines, golden and Bonelli's eagles and Harris' hawks. I have also accompanied falconers worldwide hawking with and flying several species including, amongst many others, bat falcons, ornate hawk eagles, crowned eagles and harpy eagles. Throughout the years I have also gained an extensive insight into breeding birds of prey. I try to visit falconers worldwide to gain further experience and broaden my knowledge about hawks, falconry traditions and techniques in different countries and cultures. Through art, I also want to capture the essence of our wonderful and beloved passion: falconry.



Heather's
female
red-tail with
fox squirrel.
Photo credit:
Heather
McNemar.

Practicing Falconry in Appalachia

By Heather McNemar

with excerpts from *Squirrel Hawking in Appalachia* by Heather McNemar

All styles of falconry present their own set of challenges. This is one of my favourite things about the sport. This is also why, while I may not always understand the fascination with certain types of falconry, I'm still able to appreciate the dedication and discipline that goes into them if they're being done well.

Me? I'm a squirrel hawker – a breed of falconer sometimes looked down on in the falconry community. We're frequently depicted as 'uncouth' and 'rough-around-the-edges.' Our hawking is often considered to be lacking in quality flights. Our quarry is characterised as less- than-noble, and our birds clunky and lacklustre.

Admittedly, there may be some shred of truth to the first statement (if I'm forced to include myself as a reference), but I consider the last three notions to be entirely false. I also believe there's no place where these squirrel hawking misnomers are more easily discredited than in the heart of the Appalachian region of the United States.

I live in the state of West Virginia, nestled into the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The peaks have been subjected to millions of years of

natural erosion, so they don't boast anything close to Colorado's 'fourteeners'. Instead of elevation, what has made this group of mountains a challenge for its inhabitants is the alternating ridges running north to south, creating a barrier to travel. Even after the invention of the automobile, the terrain continued to make travel extremely difficult. For years, much of the region was closed off to the outside world, creating a unique culture among its people. There's no denying the terrain has played a role in defining Appalachian culture. It has also played a role in defining the falconry that's practiced here.

In 2019, I released my first book, *Squirrel Hawking in Appalachia*. I intended it be an ode to mentorship, but sometimes a story takes on a mind of its own. In the end, I did stay true to honouring my mentors, but an ode to a place also developed among the pages. When I read my book in its entirety for the first time, it occurred to me how unique squirrel hawking in Appalachia really is. It's something I'd taken for granted for years.

There's very little flat land to hawk in my neck of the Appalachian woods. We're generally forced to hawk



the sides of steep ridges, which means hiking to the top with our birds hooded on the fist before we cast them off to start hawking. Then, we hawk the ridges from one end to the other, only going downhill when the birds have a slip. Hawking uphill obviously puts the hawks at a disadvantage.

'Ray has just told me I may have to take care of the squirrel if Grettle [Ray's red-tail] gets it. He's back a way, and the hill is really steep. I have to hold on to a tree not to slide down it.'

Grettle and the squirrel fall straight down towards me. I don't have to move an inch. I just hold out my glove and catch them both, gently bringing them to the ground. I pull out my poker, dispatch the squirrel, then wait for Ray to get there for the trade.'

We are practical people though, so when the opportunity arises to catch a ride to the top of a ridge, we take it. The Appalachian people are a kind people and are generally willing to help not only their neighbours, but total strangers as well.

'We trade a beer to a farmhand for a ride up the hill on a side-by-side. Mags rides hooded on my fist. We're in the front seat. Ray is standing on the back bumper.'

The hill is muddy and slick, and the side-by-side isn't in the best shape. We spin up the hill. The transmission kicks out of gear, and we begin sliding backwards down the hill.

"Yeah, that's what it does," the farmhand yells over the engine.

I reach for the dash to get a grip. Behind me, I hear Ray laugh. He's getting a kick out of this. I contemplate jumping off but decide to ride it out instead.

The farmhand gets another run for the hill. This time we spin up to a spot where it's not as steep. We're going to make it. He drops us off at the tree line.

"Easier than walkin'," Ray laughs.'

In addition to the steepness of the terrain, another challenge is large patches of briars interspersed throughout the forests. These patches can be much wider than rabbit hawking patches in open fields. In fact, they can be so large it can take several minutes to get to a hawk if she's on game, a potentially dangerous situation when hawking fox squirrels. We try to avoid these briar patches, but sometimes, running into them is inevitable.

'The squirrel decides to bail down the hill. He jumps from a limb to try to get to another tree, but Mags grabs him mid-air. It's a beautiful grab, but she's already got a ton of momentum behind her, and she's pointed downhill.'

I stand there watching until she goes out of sight. It looks like she went five miles. I shake my head, pull out my phone and start the GPS program. 769 feet [234 metres] away. 769 feet through a solid wall of briars.'

Just when I think the land can't make hawking any harder for us if it tried, it gives us a river or a creek at the bottom of a ridge. We'll ford these bodies of water and hawk the next ridge in most instances, but sometimes a red-tail works a squirrel to the bottom, and we're forced to hawk at the river bank.

'As we were waiting for her to come down [with the squirrel], we looked around, and realised we had ended up right on the river bank. "She's gonna go in the river," Ray hollered over at me.'



Heather, her female red-tail and 936g fox squirrel. Photo credit: Ray Bowman





Heather's female red-tail with gray squirrel double.
Photo credit: Heather McNemar.

I thought so, too. I glanced over the bank. It was straight down about eight feet. "Who's goin' in?" Ray asked laughing, just as Mags broke free and headed straight down for the river.

I didn't think. I jumped the bank before Mags even landed. By some minor miracle, she hugged the tree trunk as she came down and landed on the exposed roots of the tree, instead of in the river.

The only problem now, was Mags was above my head . . . I'd run out of footholds on the roots [of the tree], so this spot had to do. I shoved my leg between two roots to steady myself. . . I reached up, anchored the squirrel and dispatched it, all above my head.

The squirrel was dead, but I had no way to get it out of there to trade Mags. Then I heard Ray. "Reach her up to me."

I grabbed the squirrel and Mags with my right hand and stretched my arm up as far as it would go. Ray grabbed them both and waited at the top while I ran the bank and found a spot I could climb up.'

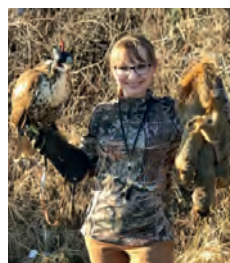
We also have to make special considerations due to our quarry in Appalachia. The polarising argument between female and male red-tails for squirrel hawking could fill a book, but I'll try to keep it simple here. In

West Virginia, it's imperative we fly large female red-tails due to our high percentage of fox squirrels, which also tend to be larger than fox squirrels farther south of us. We don't fly big females for the status. We fly them out of necessity.

During my current bird's passage season, she caught only six gray squirrels. Fox squirrels: 19. One of my mentor's favourite sayings is, "Hawk what ya got," and here in central West Virginia, we've got big fox squirrels.

In addition to a fox squirrel's size, we must also consider their attitude. Instead of bailing when being chased by a red-tail, a buck fox squirrel will often turn around and growl in a showdown with the hawk. This display is enough to intimidate a red-tail if she doesn't have a confident attitude. In fact, some red-tails refuse fox squirrels altogether. These birds aren't a good match for squirrel hawking here, but it's my opinion that the *right* red-tail flying on fox squirrels in the heart of Appalachia carries with it the ability to disprove any squirrel hawking misnomer.

Squirrel hawking in Appalachia is truly its own style of hawking – one worthy of consideration and exploration by any curious falconer. I consider myself fortunate to get to practice it. It's my style of hawking, and I wager this will always be so for me.



Heather Mc Nemar

Heather McNemar is a squirrel hawker resident in West Virginia, USA. While the available quarry in the state limits the types of hawks that can be flown there, she says she'd still be flying red-tails at squirrels even if a broader selection of quarry existed. She enjoys the three-dimensional aspect of hunting an animal that runs the horizontal plane of the earth as well as the vertical plane of the trees, producing some amazing flights for a highly underrated bird in a highly underrated and often misunderstood form of falconry. A proud member of the *West Virginia Falconry Club* and *NAFA*, Heather is also the author of *Squirrel Hawking in Appalachia* – her account of a season spent hawking with her mentor in the Appalachian foothills.

New River Gorge in the Appalachian Mountains, West Virginia, USA. Photo credit: Sean Pavone.

Photo credit: Ray Bowman.

TAITA FALCON IN ZIMBABWE

By Munene Kermer



Munene Kermer handling the Taita falcon. Photo by Sean Wellock.

The last surviving Taita falcon from the *Zimbabwe Falconers' Club* Taita falcon breeding programme was handed over to Falcon College in 2017.

It was a tiercel (male) in full adult plumage with an age estimated at 15 years. The school's falconry club took care of him with the hope of getting him flying, but sadly he died some months later.

Even though he was an old hawk, he was one of the most stunning birds any of us had ever seen.

It was a huge privilege and a great honour to take care of the last surviving captive bred Taita falcon in Zimbabwe. Just seeing this very rare hawk alive, which many bird and raptor enthusiasts around the world never get the chance to do, was an incredible delight.

On behalf of the *Falcon College Falconry Club*, I would like to thank the *Zimbabwe Falconers' Club* for this once in a lifetime opportunity – this is something we will certainly never forget!



Taita falcon.
Photo by
Munene
Kermer.

The 1985 *Falcon College Falconry Club*. Photo by Ron Hartley.



The 2017 *Falcon College Falconry Club*. Photo by Barbara Heymans.



The 2017 *Falcon College Falconry Club*. Photo by Barbara Heymans.



A falconry life in Zimbabwe

By Gary Stafford

I was just thirteen years old when I first saw a hunting hawk in action. I was walking with a group of boys along a bush road in Gatooma in Rhodesia. At the time, we had a speckled mouse bird as a pet and this little bird was flying around our group as we walked along. Out of nowhere, a black hawk burst from the bushes, snatched the mouse bird out of the air and flew off into the dense forest. The other boys shouted and threw stones at it, while I stood in awe and thought “how cool was that?”

About a year later, I was out shooting red-eyed doves with my air rifle when I found a brancher black-

shouldered kite. I immediately felt that I should rescue this bird because it could hardly fly and would certainly die if someone did not take care of it. I searched for any information I could find about looking after such a bird and, so, learned the basics of how to handle and take good care of a bird of prey. Being a rather solitary boy, I loved going into the bush with just my rifle and bird for company. On one such occasion, I encountered a man with a goshawk on his fist and an English setter by his side. In fact, he appeared out of the bush like a vision, raised his hand to feel my bird’s keel and said what good condition she was in. Then, just as suddenly as he had appeared, he walked off and disappeared into the bush again, leaving me dumbstruck. I don’t know who this man was, nor did I ever see him again. In fact, I did not have contact with any falconer again for the next nine years. By then, my curiosity about falconry was well and truly established but, being in the military during the Rhodesian Bush War, I didn’t have the opportunity to pursue my interest any further. Eventually, in 1982, I got to know some falconers and accompanied them on a few hawking expeditions. It was there that I first saw peregrines, lanners, Ovambo sparrowhawks, African goshawks and African hawk-eagles being flown over open wetlands and fields at a variety of quarry.

I left Zimbabwe at the end of 1982 and moved to South Africa to acquire an apprenticeship. My interest

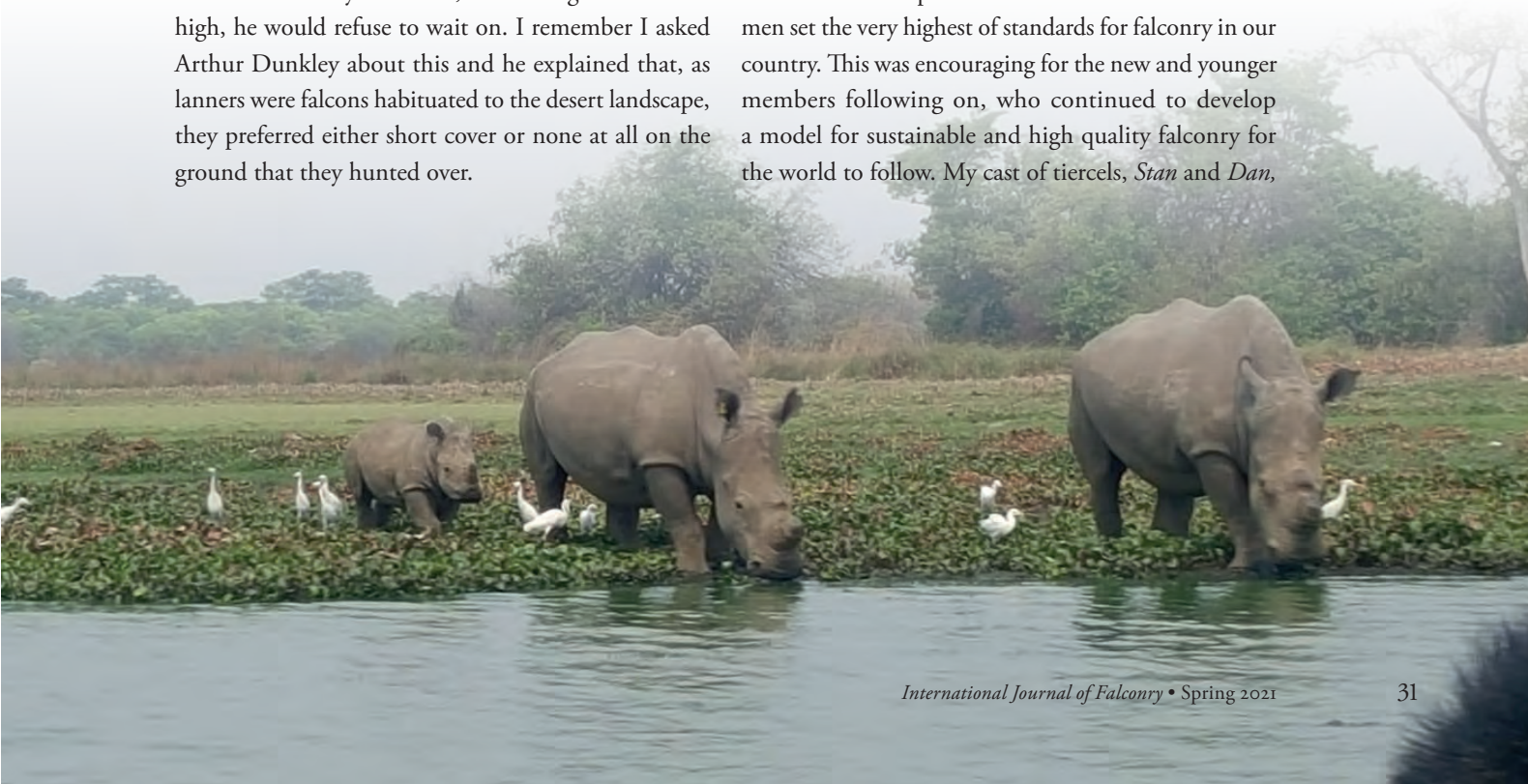


in falconry was now embedded in my heart and I thus set out to get a rufous-breasted sparrowhawk. I had no mentor or helper in my endeavour but, still, I succeeded and got an eyass. At that time falconry was illegal in South Africa's Cape Province. To get around this, I became a volunteer at a bird park where I could safely hide my spar, in plain sight so to speak. However, over the December holidays my spar disappeared. Some years later, I got to know another experienced falconer and he admitted to me that it had been he who had taken my hawk, not knowing of my involvement with her. He had enjoyed a long and successful partnership with her in the field and for that reason I was happy to forgive him. However, I realised that I could not live in a land where falconry was illegal and therefore returned to Zimbabwe in 1984. On my return, I joined the local falconry club and started off with a gabar goshawk, flying her mostly at quail, shrike and crane.

Zimbabwe has a grading system which allows for wild-taken hawks to be used for falconry, provided that a falconry apprenticeship has been completed by the applicant and that he has been deemed competent in the necessary skills to both care for and train his hawk. In 1986, I managed to trap a passage lanneret and, in my first season, I had over one hundred kills with quarry species including doves, gamebirds, snipe, louries and shrikes. By this time, I was hawking regularly with some other falconers and I had got to know Rudy Gieswien, who was very encouraging. I had noted that my lanneret was very efficient on open ground where the cover was very short but, when the grass was knee high, he would refuse to wait on. I remember I asked Arthur Dunkley about this and he explained that, as lanners were falcons habituated to the desert landscape, they preferred either short cover or none at all on the ground that they hunted over.



In 1988, I took up my first cast of peregrine tiercels. They both came from the *Zimbabwe Falconry Club* breeding project. The club was actually breeding more birds than it required and I followed the lead of my mentor and best friend Rudy Gieswien, who had flown the most spectacular tiercels for some years. Rudy and Arthur Dunkley were undoubtedly the top falconers in southern Africa at that time and I was very fortunate indeed to hunt with both of them on a regular basis and to learn so much from them. They had two very different approaches and styles to their practice of falconry. Arthur, who is a surgeon, was very analytical, scientific and precise in his approach. Rudy, on the other hand, was more instinctive and flew his birds from his heart. He may not have understood all the details but his love and passion for the sport made him and his hawks a spectacular combination. These two men set the very highest of standards for falconry in our country. This was encouraging for the new and younger members following on, who continued to develop a model for sustainable and high quality falconry for the world to follow. My cast of tiercels, *Stan* and *Dan*,



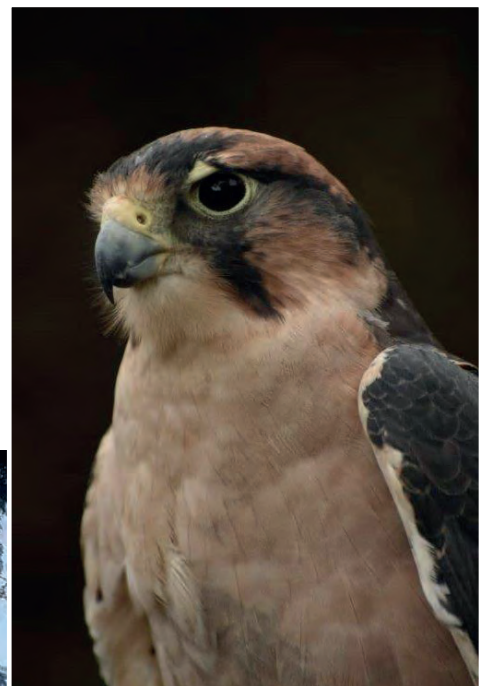


were usually flown in open country with scattered acacia trees and mostly at three of the doves species: the red-eyed pigeon, the cape turtle dove and the laughing dove. Another favourite quarry to fly young tiercels at were the Ethiopian snipe. These little birds are very fast, agile fliers and really exciting to hunt. For finding and marking down such game birds, we used gundogs such as the English pointer or else, my favourite, the English setter.

I favoured a cast of tiercels because I found real excitement in watching them hunting cooperatively; the two boys strategising in every situation of the pursuit, truly flying in unison. On one occasion, I put them up over an area of some scorched land with only a single small tree standing in it. There was a dove in the tree and I was very confident of an easy kill when I cast both the boys off. To my surprise, although *Stan* rang

up over the dove in its haven, *Dan* took off and, instead, he circled up over a reed bed near a small dam some 200 metres away. This was unusual because they normally mounted together, one turning clockwise and the other anti-clockwise, so that they were always scanning every inch of the bush as they pivoted in the sky high above. When I flushed the dove from the tree, it took off but it had no obvious cover to make for. On realising this, it made a sharp right turn and bolted towards the reed bed with *Stan* powering down after it, in hot pursuit. It looked like the dove might make its escape until *Dan*, who had been waiting patiently above, stooped from on high and ambushed it in deadly style. Sadly, *Dan* was electrocuted on a power line after four fantastic years of falconry together. *Stan* went on to be part of our breeding project.

Rastus and *Festus* made up the second cast of peregrine tiercels that I flew. I used to regularly hunt doves with them out on open ground and usually with a stream somewhere nearby. The two tiercels would ring up and up, always with one of them about 20 metres below the other. On a flush, the lower one would strike first, usually getting a foot to the quarry before the higher placed tiercel arrived right behind to collect the prize. Sometimes,





the first strike would knock the dove down onto the hard ground below and, as it bounced up, the following tiercel would strike and knock it in again so that it bounced along the ground, a bit like playing cartwheels, especially when the first tiercel struck again and bounced it on even further. These flights were very spectacular to follow and my good friends, Henk Dykstra from the Netherlands and Christian De Coune from Belgium, loved to watch these two tiercels in action. Simon Smit was another Dutch falconer who used to visit me often.

The climate in Zimbabwe overall is warm. In winter, the daily temperatures are between 20 and 30 degrees Celsius, there is virtually no rain and the grass cover is very low. In summer, the temperature ranges from 23 to 36 degrees Celsius but the warmer weather is also accompanied by heavy rain and the ground cover is much taller and heavier. There are no legislated hunting seasons for falconers in Zimbabwe. My favourite time is May to October except when I have eyasses. They are available before the rains and need to be flown to gain experience. However, my favourite time to fly is from August to December because the ground cover is reducing all the time and the quarry species congregate at the water points. The fields we hawk over are open grassland for cattle grazing or else along fields where crops like maize are grown. Falconry in Zimbabwe has struggled over the last twenty years, largely due to the political unrest present and the land seizures that have taken place. I have been able to keep flying a variety of hawks including peregrines at gamebirds, duck and Guinea fowl but I had not flown a cast of tiercels

together for some time. This year, however, I was lucky enough to get myself a cast of peregrines again.

The two boys were flying together exceptionally well until one tiercel landed on a power line and was electrocuted. I had a share of drama too with the remaining tiercel, *Little Man*. I had just cast him off last week and he was ringing up nicely some 300 metres away, when an Ayres's eagle stooped out of the clouds and struck him down. I searched the area, using my 1985 F.L. Electronics receiver. From the beeping signal, I had a good notion of the approximate area he was in but not the exact location. I searched it thoroughly until nightfall but could not pinpoint his position. After dark, I retreated and spent the night with the restlessness that only a falconer with his falcon out on the loose knows. My dreams were filled with images of lifeless bunches of feathers on the ground and suffused with the sounds of a beeping transmitter. Just like my falconer brothers have done for centuries, indeed for millennia, I was up before dawn and at 04:30 I was out searching again, hoping against hope that it wouldn't be his remains that I would find.

On arriving back to the location, I switched on my receiver to take a reading. I felt a wave of shock and dismay hit me as there wasn't a peep from the receiver. My heart sunk. Either the transmitter was dead or else *Little Man* had moved on, which could mean he was still alive. It seemed unlikely at first that he had moved, as it was still so early in the day but, way off to one side, was a gum plantation and I headed off for there. Before I reached there, I heard the first faint beep of the



transmitter from my receiver and my heart lightened. He had moved. I drew out my lure and began swinging it, giving my shout of encouragement, “Hoyi!”, and in came *Little Man* – and with him that great feeling of relief that the retrieval of a lost hawk always brings.

I am incredibly fortunate because we live by a lake in a very good area for practicing falconry. I built a bird park some 28 years ago: Kuimba Shiri Bird Park. Although I am a falconer, I am also an environmental activist, taking care of orphaned and injured birds for the last 33 years. Our environment is under constant pressure from tree felling, over-fishing and a general lack of control. We regularly are presented with injured or sick birds of prey. Just two weeks ago, we were asked to help with a concussed African goshawk. My son, Joshua, drove 600 kilometres, dodging the Covid lockdown and police road blocks and travelling on many bad roads to rescue this injured bird. As part of her rehabilitation, we began to fly her and she has caught a button quail and a Senegal coucal in the last

two days. *Little Man* has trained on well and he, too, had his first kill: a yellow throated longclaw.

Along with the rehabilitation of birds, I started the first avian educational display in Africa. I was asked to train and fly some eagles for some BBC documentaries. While I was training up some rehabilitated birds, which included an African fish eagle, a gymnogene and both martial and crowned eagles, many people came and watched. I really enjoyed talking to people about my birds and I realised just how little people know about these wonderful creatures. I therefore developed both a static and a flying display that has introduced many people to the wonder-world of nature that is all around us. In December 2020, the world famous photographer Nick Brandt did a photo shoot with nine of my birds, all of which were genuine rehabilitated wild ones. These photos will be shown in September 2021 in an exhibition to be called “The Day may Break.” It will bring some very positive attention to Zimbabwe and especially to Kuimba Shiri and the use of falconry as a conservation tool.



THE RESCUE AND REHABILITATION OF A WILD RED KITE FOR THE SECOND TIME IN ITS LIFE

By Dr. Andres Pohl

As falconers, we are frequently asked for advice and assistance when an injured or sick bird of prey needs help. In many cases, because of our specialist knowledge, we are the first point of contact for either individuals or government institutions. Laypersons are often reluctant to even touch sick or injured birds, afraid of hurting or aggravating their condition further. As falconers, it is obviously part of our ethos that we should step in, it being our duty to provide the bird with treatment and support until it can be released. Sometimes, veterinary treatment is required for the bird and so consultation with a qualified veterinarian or a visit to a specialised avian clinic is necessary.

In this particular case an adult male red kite (*Milvus milvus*) was presented to me for a second veterinary opinion regarding its condition after being found, unable to fly, on a field near Bismarck, Saxony-Anhalt in Germany. On physical examination, the kite was found to be lethargic and mildly under-conditioned with a pectoral muscle score of 3/9. Its weight was 870g and the ring it carried on one leg showed that it had been handled in Portugal at some stage in its life (*Secretaria de Cempaestrado Ambiente Lisboa M011786*). The bird also showed the typical akinesic behaviour of a kite, lying flat on the floor.

The kite underwent a thorough examination including throat swab analysis, blood sampling for plasma biochemistry, whole-body radiographic imaging and faecal examination. The throat swab was positive for *Trichomonas*, a protozoan parasite and *Capillaria*, a nematode worm. The plasma biochemistry panel suggested that there was damage to the liver and whole-body ventrodorsal radiographic imaging revealed a small metal piece proximal to the ulna at the level of the left elbow joint: most likely part of a bullet. All the other organs and bones in the radiographic images were without any abnormal findings. To investigate if the bird was suffering from lead poisoning a repeat blood sample was taken, revealing a high lead value (10.2µg/dL). The faecal examination was positive for *Capillaria* species of worms.

Treatment started with Carnidazole, an anti-protozoal drug, and the anthelmintic Fenbendazole. An intravenous administration of 12ml of Lactated Ringer's solution was given twice daily for two days and Calcium-EDTA was given intravenously once daily for five days to treat the lead poisoning. A multivitamin injection was also given intramuscularly. On the day of admission the kite was force fed but, from the second day onwards, ate by itself (one pigeon morning and evening).



Ventrodorsal recumbency; the bullet on the left ulna has been magnified in the photo.



Laterolateral recumbency; no appreciable disease.



As the kite was lively, alert and responsive on the third day of physical examination, we decided to proceed with surgical removal of the lead fragment. The bird was sedated with an intramuscular injection of Midazolam and Butorphanol then anaesthetised using Isoflurane via a face mask before being intubated and maintained on a lower concentration of Isoflurane. The patient was placed in dorsal recumbency and the feathers surrounding the affected area were removed. The surgical site was aseptically prepared with an iodine solution with a minimum of five minutes contact time, then the skin incised and the bullet piece removed. The skin was closed with 4-0 Monosyn, a synthetic absorbable suture material, using simple interrupted sutures. The patient received postoperative pain relief with an intramuscular injection of Meloxicam and recovered from anaesthesia without incident.

Over the following days the kite continued to receive its medications and recovered well, its weight increasing to 1,065g. After seven days, a blood sample was taken once more to check the lead level and revealed a value of 5.0 µg/dL, a good deal lower than the previous level. The lead poisoning medication, Calcium-EDTA, was continued and, on the tenth day after admission, the

bird was in such good condition, being wild and quite aggressive, that the decision was taken to release it.

Further investigations in cooperation with *Rotmilan Zentrum am Museum Heineanum* (Germany) and *AMUS (Accion por el Mundo Salvaje) Centro de Recuperacion de Fauna Salvaje* (Portugal) revealed that the red kite in question had a previous history of rehabilitation. He had been found and admitted to a rescue centre on 17th December 2012 in central Portugal, where he was treated, ringed and released.

Red kites are a migratory species. Their distribution area is primarily in Central, West and Southwest Europe with over 50% of the worldwide population present in the State of Saxony-Anhalt in Germany. Furthermore, there is a large population of breeding birds in France, Spain, Italy and Switzerland as well as in Great Britain. A small number are found in Sweden in Northern Europe. The red kite is one of the short or middle-distance migratory birds. If the weather conditions in wintertime are mild, the birds stay in their breeding areas. If the weather is inclement, they migrate to warmer climes for example from Germany to Portugal. This case report shows how important it can be to ring birds, without which we would never have found out that this red kite was rescued twice within a period of eight years at locations approximately 2,000km apart.



Dr.
ANDRES
POHL

Veterinarian with specialised certification in the treatment of ornamental, zoo and wild birds.

From 1993 to 1999, I studied veterinary medicine at the *Free University of Berlin*.

In 1999, a job offer led me to the *Abu Dhabi Falcon Research Hospital* where I went on to learn all about falconry from the Emir's falconers. Along with teaching me how to handle and train falcons, they taught me the habits and life cycles of quarry species and provided an insight into traditional Arabic medicine, enabling me to learn much about Arabic falconry's cultural roots. During my stay in the Emirates, I flew my first tiercel peregrine at stone curlew.

In 2005, I became a member of the *Verband Deutscher Falkner (VDF)* and their national delegate with the IAF. I commenced hawking with Harris' hawks, successfully taking pheasant with *Akhila*. Since 2015, I have worked during the hawking season at Doha's *Qatar Falcon Centre*, relishing both my work and weekend training and hawking trips. Hunting desert hare and houbara with sakers and some hybrids, the Qataris taught me how to read the desert, find quarry, locate the best camping places, find water and much more: wonderful opportunities to improve my falconry skills.



Nikolai Ivanovich Kutepov and his historic masterpiece: *Grand-Ducal, Tsarist and Imperial Hunting in Russia*

By Jevgeni Shergalin

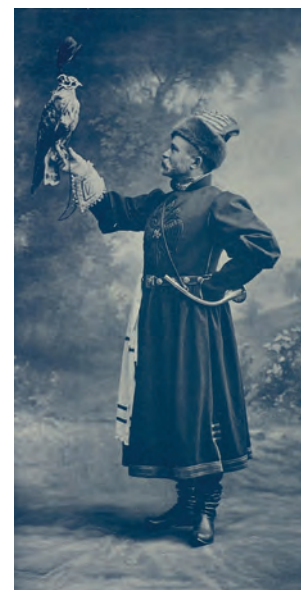


This year, we celebrate the 170th anniversary of the birthday of Nikolai Ivanovich Kutepov (1851-1907). A lieutenant general in the Russian army, he was also head of the Imperial hunting estate and author of the multivolume essay *Grand-Ducal, Tsarist and Imperial Hunting in Russia*.

Born into a noble family in January 1851 in Russia's Vladimir Province, Nikolai received a home education, after which he graduated from the 3rd Military Alexander's School in 1869 in the 1st category. Joining the Life Guards Rifle Battalion of the Imperial Family as an ensign, he commenced a successful military career of some 30 years, participating in the Russo-Turkish war (1877-1878) and attaining the rank of major-general in 1900. He won several prizes for fencing and target shooting. He was awarded the Orders of St. Stanislaus and of St. Anna, both 3rd degree with swords and bow. Whilst still serving with the Guards, between 1885 and 1906 he was in charge of Imperial hunting finances. He lived with his family, including his children Alexander, Georgy, Maria, Nikolai and Vera, in the Gatchina Priory Palace, where he was entitled to a state apartment. To this day, one of the hills near the Priory Palace is called Kutepovskaya.

In May 1891, Tsar Alexander III (1845-1894) expressed a desire to record the history of the tsar's hunting in Russia, instructing Colonel Kutepov to write it. This was no arbitrary choice: as well as being closely involved with Imperial hunting, Kutepov was an excellent connoisseur of its history, customs and traditions and so took up the job with enthusiasm. When writing his work, he used the advice and help of prominent scientists such as S.N. Shubinsky, editor-in-chief of the journal *Historical Herald*, and I.V. Pomyalovsky, a famous philologist and archaeologist. Other contributors included writer and literary critic P.N. Polevoy and A.V. Polovtsov, who was head of the general archives of the Ministry of the Imperial Court. A number of famous artists were engaged to illustrate the book, among them V.M. Vasnetsov, A.P. Ryabushkin, I.E. Repin, A.N. Benois, E.E. Lancere and V.A. Serov. The principal artist, however, was academician Nikolai Semenovich Samokish (1860-1944), who alone made 173 miniature paintings for this series of books. In total, the four-volume publication contained 87 full-page illustrations and many other depictions in the text. The number of printed copies of the first volume was 400, whilst 500 copies of each of the other volumes





were produced, all by the Expedition of Procurement of State Papers. At a recent Russian auction, all four volumes realised 7,000,000 Russian roubles (about 80,000 euro).

Kutepov, who also wrote an article on tsarist and grand ducal hunting in Russia for the *Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary*, retired in 1906 with the final rank of lieutenant-general, and died on December 23rd 1907 in St. Petersburg. His spiritual child, his opus on *Grand-Ducal, Tsarist and Imperial Hunting in Russia*, continues to be the best and the most expensive book on this subject ever published in Russia. It contains many in-depth descriptions of Russian falconry as practiced down the ages and is superbly illustrated. Work on the

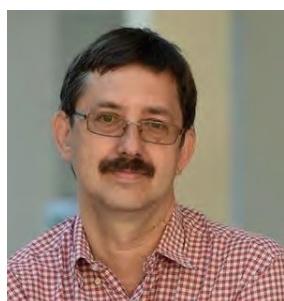
final two volumes was finished by his widow and the publication was funded by the Cabinet of his Imperial Majesty. Two volumes were later translated into French. The edition appeared in several grades of extravagance. The most splendid were the tray copies which had all-leather bindings with silver squares in the form of double-headed eagles and calico dust jackets with triple gold edging and moire endpapers. In particular cases, these were pasted over from the inside with fabric. The simplest version of the edition came in paper publishing covers.

The four QR codes below provide a direct link to the volumes, which may be looked through and downloaded free of charge.

For further details regarding the illustrations of this article, please contact the author, Mr. Shergalin.

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JEVGENI
SHERGALIN, BSc, CEd.

Born in Tallinn, Estonia, in 1961, Jevgeni Shergalin is a raptor biologist whose research has focused on the raptors of Northern Eurasia. During the 1980s, Jevgeni was a regular broadcaster and journalist on wildlife conservation issues in the Estonian media. In the mid-1990s, he began to work jointly with Dr. Nick Fox, compiling bibliographies both on the large falcons of the Soviet Union territories and the region's falconry history. From 1991 to 2005, he was a consultant and translator of ornithological information from the former USSR, involved in the production of about 30 books on birds, published both in Western

Europe and North America. He also served as co-moderator of *The Raptor Biology* mailing list from 1999 to 2019, and is author of more than 200 articles on birds, on the history of ornithology and on falconry. Information Advisor on the IAF Advisory Committee from 2003-2019, he is currently archivist of *The Falconry Heritage Trust* (from 2005) and has also been a consultant to *International Wildlife Consultants Ltd. (UK)* since 2017.





Bustard hawking in Central Asia

By Mark Williams

The past seven years I spent living in the Arabian Gulf have been very enlightening and full of different experiences and adventures, especially regarding my falconry. The Arab people's preferred style is for pursuit hawking, usually using large falcons like sakers and peregrines but in relatively recent years this has included pure gyrs and, of course, gyr x peregrine hybrids. It is easy to judge things that don't follow the same style as our own but I have to say I have come to respect the Arab style, which certainly demands more from a falcon than the western waiting on method. Typically, in waiting on, we teach our falcons to climb to a height at their own pace and then, when in position, we serve them; usually the quarry is killed in the stoop or after a short chase using the stoop's momentum to overtake it. It takes a lot of training to get a falcon to consistently climb up to 600-1,000 ft or more and, while this requires good fitness and mental conditioning, there is no sense of urgency on the falcon's part: some even achieve this by using thermals to soar.

By contrast, as I have learned, the pursuit style can not only take a falcon up to 500-1,000 ft or more but she must do it in a steep, fast climb with a far greater sense of urgency, using a direct flight and fast speed if she is to overhaul and overcome the quarry. Even once at the quarry's altitude, this often involves a prolonged high altitude chase and repeated attacks over several kilometres depending upon the quarry species and the falcon's fitness. Because there is usually no cover to dump into, this endurance flight truly pushes the fitness and confidence limits of both falcon and

quarry. Eventually, either one or the other gives up. In the quarry's case this is usually when they realise they cannot outclimb or shake off the falcon, so they seek to descend and defend themselves on the ground if they cannot find refuge in cover. This is the signal it is all over for the quarry, which is caught or hit in the descent or killed on the ground.

Hawks
weathering
on blocks.





Passage peregrine on little bustard.

It may surprise some to hear that hawking is actually illegal now within the UAE with the exception of three designated reserves that charge falconers to hunt, much like “canned” big game hunting in USA. The rule has been in place for some time to try conserve game species but, in recent years, it has been re-enforced due to how prolific unauthorised hawking has become: falconers now face hefty fines and confiscations of property or even, in extreme cases, prison sentences. The hunting preserves certainly cater very well to the groups with nice tented accommodation, dining and washing facilities, and are considerably cheaper than trying to organise an overseas trip that can run into hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars for a large party. However, such preserves use captive bred quarry so the quality of the flight rarely matches that of wild prey – though for some it is better than no hawking at all. My observations of falconry in the Gulf countries suggest that, unless training specifically for the falcon races, there is little reason to own a falcon in recent times. This is, in part, why the respective governments support and fund falcon races, without which an important segment of their cultural heritage will disappear. Actual hawking is limited to one or two annual trips abroad to countries that still have quarry, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan or Azerbaijan, or, if you are fortunate to accompany a VIP, sheikh or royal family member, to places like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and Morocco. Otherwise, there is no legal hawking available to the average man. Qatar and Bahrain are tiny countries with little habitat for game birds and both are densely populated with falconers. Kuwait, Saudi and the UAE



Feeding up a female gyr x peregrine following her first kill.



Top falcon race contender Khalifa Bin Mujren releases his falcon at the Dubai falcon races.



Another young peregrine feeding off her young bustard kill.

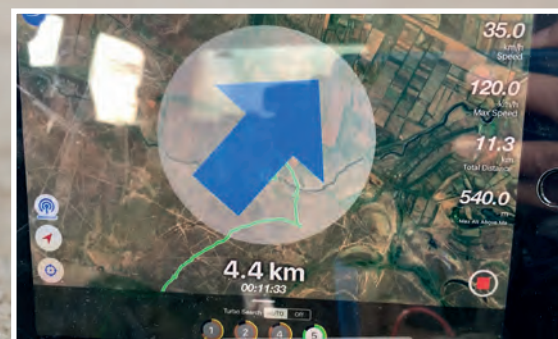
have more space and habitat and higher numbers of migrating game birds such as houbara and *kairowan*. Most other neighbouring countries surrounding the GCC are no longer safe due to unrest or war and the vast majority of falconers cannot afford a trip to safer destinations. This leaves the majority of Arab falconers in a perpetual state of training their hawks using captive bred prey such as pigeons or duck or fitness conditioning tools such as drones or RC planes. It is an ironic situation where falconers can afford the best falcons and equipment from all over the world and yet they have very little to hunt. It makes me grateful for my extended seven-month hawking season back in Canada with relatively easy access to abundant game and my only expenses being time and fuel: I have learned not to take this for granted.

During seven years living in the UAE I have had the good fortune to be invited on several occasions to join my Arab friends on hunting trips to Kazakhstan on the east, or Azerbaijan to the west, of the Caspian Sea. In the last two decades, Azerbaijan has become a popular hawking destination for many Arab countries like UAE, Saudi and Qatar since it is one of the few countries remaining that is safe and has good numbers of wild quarry including *kairowan* (Eurasian stone curlew) and houbara, both being favoured traditional quarry species Arab falconers love to hunt. However, the houbara species here is the little bustard and is quite different to the larger MacQueen's bustard. It is my opinion that the little bustard is perhaps the most difficult "off the fist" gamebird in the world to catch with a falcon. They seem slow compared to some gamebirds with faster wing

beats, but this is deceptive. They can climb on their tails steeper and faster than any gyr and some flights get up over 800 metres and can go, on average, for 10 kilometres. A falcon that can catch them consistently is greatly prized, necessitating quite a tough training regime working on all muscles including the back and shoulder area. One customer replayed a GPS flight where his very fit passage peregrine went up to 1km high and chased the houbara for 34 kilometres. He was able to keep up with the falcon as she flew over a large town in pursuit of her quarry. I still have a screen recording of this incredible flight on my iPhone and, of course, in those areas mobile coverage is sporadic at best. In years past this falcon would have most likely been lost and the telemetry considered to have failed. A falcon like this would have cost him around \$15,000 to buy as a fresh-trapped bird so the GPS radio telemetry pays for itself tenfold and allows us to experience our falcons' true potential.

Houbara hawking (*Tetrax tetrax*)

The little bustard (*Tetrax tetrax*) is the only member of the genus *Tetrax* that derives its name from the Greek word for gamebird. It breeds in southern Europe (Spain and France) and into western and central Asia. The southernmost birds are mostly resident while the Asian population migrates from southwestern Asia into northern Russia. Whilst they are supposed to be the same species, I see slight variances in plumage though these could be due to breeding plumage. Indeed, the birds being hunted in Azerbaijan and surrounding countries migrate from and to their breeding grounds



GPS technology allows us to follow the falcon during the hunt.



Teasing of a hawking companion whose car got stuck.



UAE falconers meet Qatari falconers for coffee, dates and chat.

in central Russia and, at times, can be seen in their thousands, reminding me of spring and fall snow geese migrations in central Canada. About pheasant-sized, they are considerably smaller than the MacQueen's bustard that is the more traditional houbara species hunted by Arab falconers and found throughout the Gulf, Pakistan, Russia and other ex-Soviet countries and further east into Mongolia and probably western China. However, do not let the diminutive size of these little bustard deceive you: as mentioned previously, they are unquestionably the hardest quarry for falcons flown from the fist. The little bustard is deceptively fast and their buoyant flight style misleads us into thinking they are slow. Far from it and their escape tactic is their ability to climb at a steep ascent beyond most falcons' ability including gyrfalcons that are renowned for their ability to "climb on their tails". Sandgrouse are also a very difficult fast quarry but, when flown in the waiting on style, success in hunting them becomes more of a result of good pitch and footing skills, rather than the raw speed, persistence and endurance of pursuit flights.

Hunting techniques

The only way to really successfully hunt these houbara is to train the falcon to be released from a moving vehicle. I'd never seen it done before coming to the Gulf and didn't think a falcon could handle such an ordeal until I saw it with my own eyes. It actually only takes seven or eight tries before the falcon figures it out. The falconers use 4x4 SUV trucks to drive the expansive open fields of Azerbaijan (or sand plains in the Gulf) where houbara can get up 300-400 metres away. The idea is that the driver speeds towards them at upwards of 130kph, trying to get under them before releasing the falcon somewhere around 80kph. In reality, the terrain doesn't always permit high speed and is often the cause of serious accidents as the falconers are looking up and not at where they're going: hitting a ditch at these speeds can have disastrous consequences for both vehicle and occupants.

Assuming the ground is flat and the 4x4 can approach close, the hood braces are struck (whilst steering one handed at these speeds!) and the falcon





Azerbaijani sheep herder has trapped a little bustard.



Author feeding passage peregrine up on little bustard houbara.

slipped from the driver's window. Having learned to use momentum to shoot upwards and start pumping right away, it doesn't take long for an experienced falcon to acquire the target and climb up to join them. This is when things can be very precarious for those following the flight. The falcon is reaching speeds in excess of 80kph and the falconer doesn't want to lose sight of her. Fortunately, with new technology such as the Marshall Aero-Vision GPS, they can now switch to watching the flight unfold on an iPhone, iPad or any vehicle equipped with Apple CarPlay on its dash screen and can get an exact bearing on the falcon's location and performance: quite frankly, it takes much of the stress out of the hunt.

Hunting experiences

Typically, the preferred falcons used for the little bustard are female passage peregrines and gyr x peregrine hybrids of both sexes. Contrary to what we may expect, not so many gyrs are used in such hawking. I hunted with my male gyr x peregrine and got him to a level

of fitness that I've never had a falcon at before, thanks to the support of my friend Sheikh Saeed in Dubai with whom I trained most mornings before work. There I had access to, and the use of, the RC pilot and abundant wild-trapped ducks and both feral and racing pigeons with which to train my falcons. This particular male was so fit and strong he was catching unhindered racing pigeons within nine km and ducks were little challenge for him. Of course, the terrain facilitated this style and couldn't be easily replicated in most other areas around the world where falconry is practiced. He was over-trained for the western style of gamehawking but to compete at such a level of endurance with such challenging prey, he held his own. Now all he (and I) needed was experience on wild quarry.

On my last hunt in Azerbaijan in March 2019, I got to release him under a few singles or small flocks of houbara. Gauging the migration is difficult as it is in part influenced by weather. We had missed the best time of the season and most of the migrant birds had moved up into their breeding grounds in Russia. Since the

Background image is of Kazakhstan camp.



remaining birds had been hunted hard by both falconers and gun-hunters alike, flight opportunities were fewer and they had become spooky, so would therefore flush several hundred yards away upon our approach. I had several marginal flights but one good one in particular really stood out. The typical hunting method was to have the next hawk ready and drive flat areas in the hope of spotting houbara; if they flushed wildly we'd be ready to race in their direction to and catch up. I released my tiercel at a small group of about 30-40 birds that rose several hundred yards away. In reality they were too far but flights were very few and far between on this trip and I knew my hawk was super fit. They were already 300ft up before we got anywhere near close and I let the tiercel out the window. He climbed up in a fast, powerful, steep ascent. Even in our Land Cruiser we couldn't keep up with the falcon and, when eventually hampered by difficult terrain, we stopped and pulled out the binoculars to follow the flight. After it went beyond binocular range, at about three to four km, we followed behind in the truck watching the flight direction, speed and altitude on the dash-mounted iPad. The flight ended up going 25km and a maximum altitude of over 600 metres. At one point, somewhere around 12.5km, he stooped to the ground, probably after the descending houbara, but for some reason unbeknown to us he climbed back up minutes later. He may have been unsuccessful and beaten to cover or was harassed by migrant eagles and hawks that try to rob our falcons

but the flight then proceeded another 12km before I recovered him. He was a persistent falcon and failure was not an option for him as his mental conditioning was very high. Needless to say he didn't fly the next day as he needed to recover from such a strenuous flight. It is certainly a fast-paced, high-octane style of falconry and not for the weak of heart but this is a worthy quarry and highly-prized when caught. Adrenaline is high during the chase and you also have to contend with other hazards such as competing with migrating hawks, eagles or opportunistic foxes watching the falcon descend with her prize.

In recent years falconers have also had to contend with shepherds stealing falcons, either by calling them down from a distance or grabbing them while on a kill. They would later claim to have "found" your lost hawk and ask ridiculous reward (ransom) money for it, which some Arab "victims" were happy to pay in order to recover their prized falcon. I'm sure it all once started with genuine lost hawks and generous rewards from grateful Arab falconers, but the locals soon realised it was a lucrative way to make money.

Captive bred MacQueen's houbara bustard that has successfully bred in the wild.

Little bustard roosting.



While the country is wealthy with oil and gas reserves along the Caspian's west coast, the average citizens and village folk are poor with high unemployment, so they will seize any opportunity to survive. In fact, in recent years the Azerbaijanis have begun to take advantage of their Arab guests who bring a lot of money to their local economy and it has dissuaded some from returning. This has become so bad with corrupt officials that senior plain-clothes police officers accompany hunters, hired under private contracts to help protect them from such annoyances. During my stay I had one such encounter. Watching my falcon heading way off into the distance, I saw a local throwing a pigeon out on a string to lure my bird in. As we raced across the plains he hurriedly gathered up the pigeon and stuffed it under the front seat of his white LADA. When I challenged him as to what he was doing, while my friend called down the falcon, he closed his door and window and pretended he didn't know what I was saying. Emotions can run high in these incidents.

When hawking, particularly after a successful arduous flight, I prefer to crop my bird up on a kill but with Gulf falconers there is a tendency to keep going: competitive hunting seems to have crept into modern Gulf falconry. Previously, it was about providing protein in the harsh desert climates, where dates and camel milk were the Bedouin's staple diet, but now it is viewed as a measure of your hawk's great strength and hunting ability – and no doubt the falconer's ego – to have caught more than anyone else in the group. Such unsustainable hunting has led to large

population crashes, particularly with the availability of strong powerful gyrfalcons and hybrids along with the advent of powerful 4x4s that can take falconers deeper into the desert quickly. With education and guidance from their governments, and western influences, this has been curtailed to some extent and now many conservation projects have been created to restore some species of gamebirds and gazelle that have come close to extinction in the Gulf.

Conservation of quarry species

The concept of conservation was foreign to Arab falconry until recent years but, with education, new laws have arisen alongside huge efforts to conserve quarry species by their governments: think of North America's buffalo herds a hundred or so years ago. Several Gulf countries including the UAE are now investing huge amounts of time, money and resources into trying to reverse the decline in game species in particular. Massive houbara breeding projects in the UAE and Morocco, employing upwards of 1,000 people, have slowly turned things around and today over 55,000 houbara are bred annually and released not only domestically but in other countries such as Morocco, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Closer to 'home' in the UAE it is so heart-warming to see these captive-bred birds breeding naturally in the wild. Unquestionably, some of those released in the UAE do get hunted by falconers once they leave the protection of the conservation reserve but they help offset the impact on wild birds that migrate through.



MARK WILLIAMS

A falconer for over 43 years, Mark Williams spent the first 15 years of his hawking career flying accipiters in the UK. However, in 1991 he emigrated to Canada for the express purpose of better falconry and opportunities for his young family; a decision he has never regretted. Upon arrival in Canada he switched to flying falcons, which he has done continuously ever since, and served as President for both of his provincial falconry clubs plus eight years as NAFA's Canadian Director and Canadian IAF delegate before resigning in 2012 pending his residency move to the United Arab Emirates.

In seven years' representing a world leading telemetry manufacturer within the Gulf, Mark travelled extensively in the region and participated in, or witnessed, falconry in several countries including the UAE, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, South Africa and numerous European countries. He cherishes his lifelong friends from around the world who share his passion for the sport. After recently retiring from his role in the Gulf, Mark has resettled in the same part of Canada he left seven years earlier.

He is currently flying a passage prairie falcon at partridge, grouse and ducks and plans upon adding a couple of peregrines to his team this year. He is also training one new pointer and finishing his young German wirehaired pointer ready for the 2021 season and says his retirement is busier than when he had a real job!



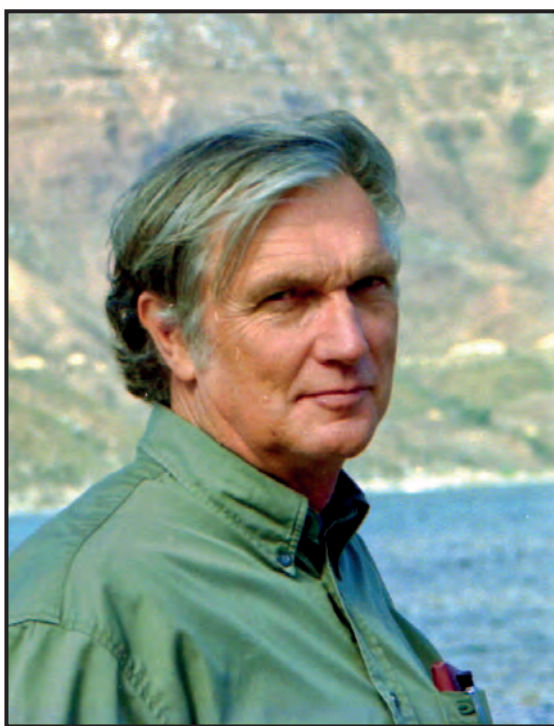
All photos were taken by the author.

IN MEMORY OF A GREAT FALCONER

Arthur Sidney Dunkley 9th October, 1943 – 28th June, 2021

ARTHUR was, without doubt, the most diversely talented man I have had the pleasure of knowing. He was an accomplished sportsman at school, here in Rhodesia, where his javelin distance record stood for over 20 years. He became a surgeon and taught surgery at the University of Zimbabwe while still practising at the Central Hospital. He was a renowned painter, photographer, author and poet. He also played, with proficiency, the guitar, piano and bagpipes, which he performed in front of the Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

He was president of the Zimbabwe Falconry Club from 1976, where he pioneered the captive breeding of both peregrine and Taita falcons. This programme resulted in a breeding surplus of peregrines which were hacked back to the wild. His research and breeding projects were continued by Ron Hartley who received acknowledgement for his work. He introduced us to hawking with tiercels, as opposed to 'traditional' falcons, through his observation of breeding pairs in the wild. To this day, my longwing of choice is the tiercel, especially when flown in a cast.



I was a young falconer when we met in 1979. He gave me my first English setter and taught me how to train and run dogs for falconry: Arthur always said "good dogs make good hawks." His analytical mind changed our falconry style from 'fumble and bumble' to 'precision' hawking with each species' particular style in mind.

He was generous with his time and experience, mentoring so many young falconers and leading, ultimately, to a very high standard of falconry. This

was recognised by world falconry leaders; the likes of Frank Bond, Tony Crosswell, Henk Dijkstra, Steve Chindgren and the former IAF president, Christian de Coune.

I will sorely miss the times we shared: the afternoons flying our hawks and falcons over his dogs, *Frost* and *Spook*, both field trial champions, then later lying on the grass with falcons gorged, discussing the stars and night sounds, enjoying the experiences with lots of beer, red wine, roasted peanuts and biltong.

Gary Stafford

(See also Gary's article elsewhere in the *Journal*)



Tiercels flown in tandem

I happened to meet Arthur Dunkley and Gary Stafford when visiting Zimbabwe on a business trip in the 80s of the previous century. I certainly remember Gary showing me his mews which, at that time, housed one of his falcons which had been wounded, having lost part of its toes when hitting a power line. The electrocution problem still exists today on a global scale as we all know! Both falconers took me out hawking in the beautiful fields around Harare. I still have vivid memories of the masterly way in which Arthur was flying his cast of tiercels in tandem at little doves hiding in acacia trees, from which they first had to be chivvied out. In those days in Zimbabwe the hawking was unique thanks to personalities like Arthur Dunkley, who set some very high standards for all to adhere to.

Dick ten Bosch

Arthur was a wonderful man whose many gifts left people amazed. First and foremost, he was a highly skilled surgeon who directly touched many lives. However, he was so much more than this, his professional career . . .

A visionary in terms of falconry and the conservation of raptors in Zimbabwe and well beyond our borders; a gundog trainer and judge renowned in Southern Africa; an artist of special importance; a man who understood the environment and whose skills in growing bonsais was spectacular and, last but not least, a viticulturalist whose winemaking skills became legendary.

Arthur was a charming, highly intelligent human being who we were all privileged to have known. Our sincere condolences to his family. Rest in Peace.

Zimbabwe Falconers' Club



A Long-time Falconer

By Arthur Dunkley

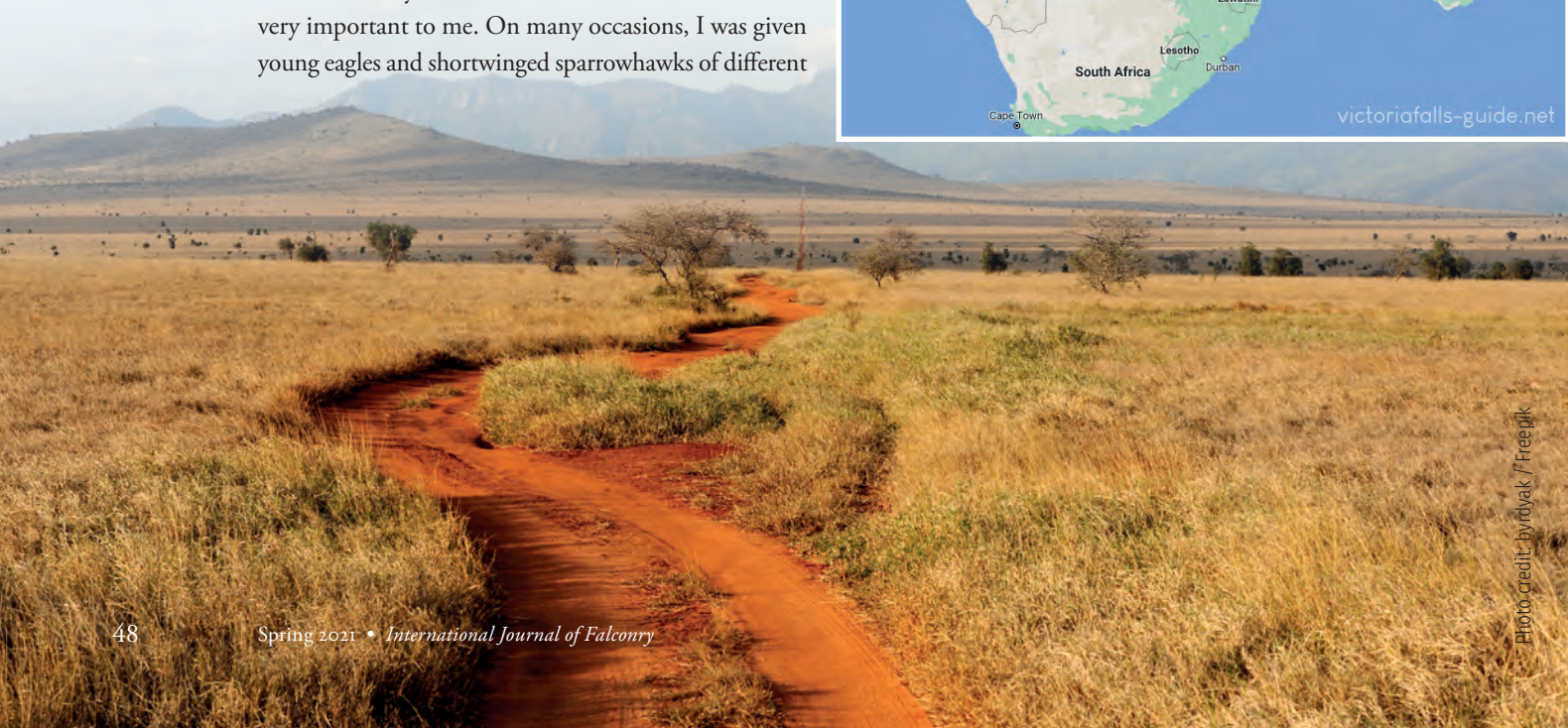
I was born in 1943 in a country in southern central Africa called, at that time, Rhodesia. In 1980, this nation achieved independence from Britain and became known as Zimbabwe. I grew up on a large farm of approximately 4,000 acres. I also spent a great deal of time with my grandparents on their farms of approximately 14,000 acres. About one third of this land was used for growing crops such as maize, tobacco and cotton. The rest was used for livestock, mainly sheep and cattle, and was essentially untouched bush with a large population of wild animals and a very large spectrum of wild bird species, including birds of prey.

From a very young age, I spent most of my time in the bush with great freedom and with my friends, the black children of the farmworkers. My only sibling, my sister, was ten years older than me and away at boarding school. My days were filled with walking in the bush, hunting birds and game with a small rifle—I shot my first large soft-skin game when I was seven. By that age, I was already a good shot and was being taught to track and live off the land by one of our workers; an old man called Pondani, who taught me many things about hunting and the bush. Many years ago I wrote a poem about him which I have included here. I hope you like it—all good falconers are good hunters.

I was often brought young animals by the farm workers as they all knew wild animals and birds were very important to me. On many occasions, I was given young eagles and shortwinged sparrowhawks of different

varieties. I never hunted with these birds at that time, but kept them at hack until they returned to the wild. I had ample opportunities to watch them grow and learn to hunt, and I became interested in how the adult wild birds lived and hunted in their natural habitats.

I developed a special love and respect for birds of prey, which has never left me. I don't believe any person could look up into the eye of a huge black eagle (or crowned eagle or martial eagle) and not come to understand and respect the power of this amazing creature within her own wild and tough environment. Remember, I am six feet tall and carrying a mature black eagle female on my fist would mean her feet would easily encircle my wrist. Her eyes would be gazing at me from six inches above my own eye level, less than two feet away. It's a strange feeling of wonder, excitement, delight and a little fear.





In my teenage years, I went to a boarding school in the big city, and my wild adventures were reduced to bunking out of school to go fishing with a stick, a hook and a line with worms and grasshoppers for bait. Then, I left the country to go to medical school, and my wildlife interests were further restricted. I did do a lot of fly fishing—mainly trout and bass fishing as food for my new family. We were poor, but petrol was cheap.

I returned to Rhodesia in 1971 and rekindled my love for the bush, but had now stopped hunting with a rifle and confined myself to wing shooting gamebirds (francolin and Guinea fowl) over well-trained pointing dogs. On one occasion, I travelled to the Eastern Cape to take part in a field trial for the pointing dogs. It is high, mountainous country with many coveys of grey-winged francolin (*Scleroptila afra*) – about the size of a red-legged partridge in Europe.

One afternoon, I was out on a training run (for the dogs) with a friend of mine, when his dog pointed a covey of grey-wings. Having seen a lanner earlier (they are common in these mountain grasslands), I glanced up to see one, a mere speck, start a hunting stoop as my friend flushed the grey-wings the dogs were pointing. I watched as the lanner slashed downward in great arcs and finally, with a sound of air being torn apart, smash into a grey-wing attempting to fly across the small valley. The quarry was dead in the air, and the lanner flipped over to catch it and drop down with it onto the sloping side of the valley below us. I was dumbstruck by the power and beauty of this wild hunt by a predator

perfectly evolved and adapted to survive in this way. I resolved then, in the moments immediately after that experience, to learn falconry.

Since then, whilst I have flown many African species of shortwinged hawks, I specialised in longwing falconry for the next 30 years. I have watched peregrines and lanners as well as many other species of falcons make spectacular kills from high stoops literally thousands of times. I have seen them fail in their hunt many times also. It is my opinion that it's one of nature's most spectacular and thrilling actions to watch, and it gives me as much joy and excitement now as it did that very first time I experienced it. Tom Cade, who was Professor of Ornithology at Cornell University (and instrumental in setting up *The Peregrine Fund* to breed peregrines in captivity for repopulating the wild, where DDT was exterminating them) once told me, many years ago in the early 1980s, that he considered falconry a very special modern form of birdwatching as well as a historical means of acquiring food by hunting.

I was also involved in setting up captive breeding of threatened species in Rhodesia and subsequently Zimbabwe, and have personally bred both peregrines and Taita falcons in captivity. This breeding programme is still active, but I am no longer personally involved. For my sins, I spent many, many years as president of the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean Falconry Association and helped to draw up the National Falconry Policy which helped to make Zimbabwe very well-known to falconers all over the world. I have met many of the world's premier falconers, including several from America and Europe.



© Ron Hartley



Black Spar and Coquib

I paint wildlife, especially birds of prey. I have also written a great deal about falconry and birds of prey, but have so far published very little. I wrote a book about falconry many years ago, which I am editing at the moment for publication. The editor has asked if I could submit some of the chapters to future editions of the magazine, which I will be happy to do. I hope you will choose to share some of it with me over the next couple of years.

I'm including some photos of the kind of terrain over which I have done most of my hawking, as well as a painting made from a sketch of one of a cast of tiercel peregrines which I flew many years ago.

All pictures of Arthur Dunkley are by Brioni Dunkley, his granddaughter.

Pondani

Age uncertain but over forty,
Could be a hundred I suppose.
Bare stick legs and an ancient jacket,
Tattered trousers, torn in places,
Old car tyres for shoes.

Face like an ancient wedge of leather,
Two deep grooves at the side of his nose.
Tiny eyes set close together,
Peering out of his wrinkled face
Lips like a hunter's bow.

Carrying his *demu*¹ over shoulder,
Battered old hat askew.

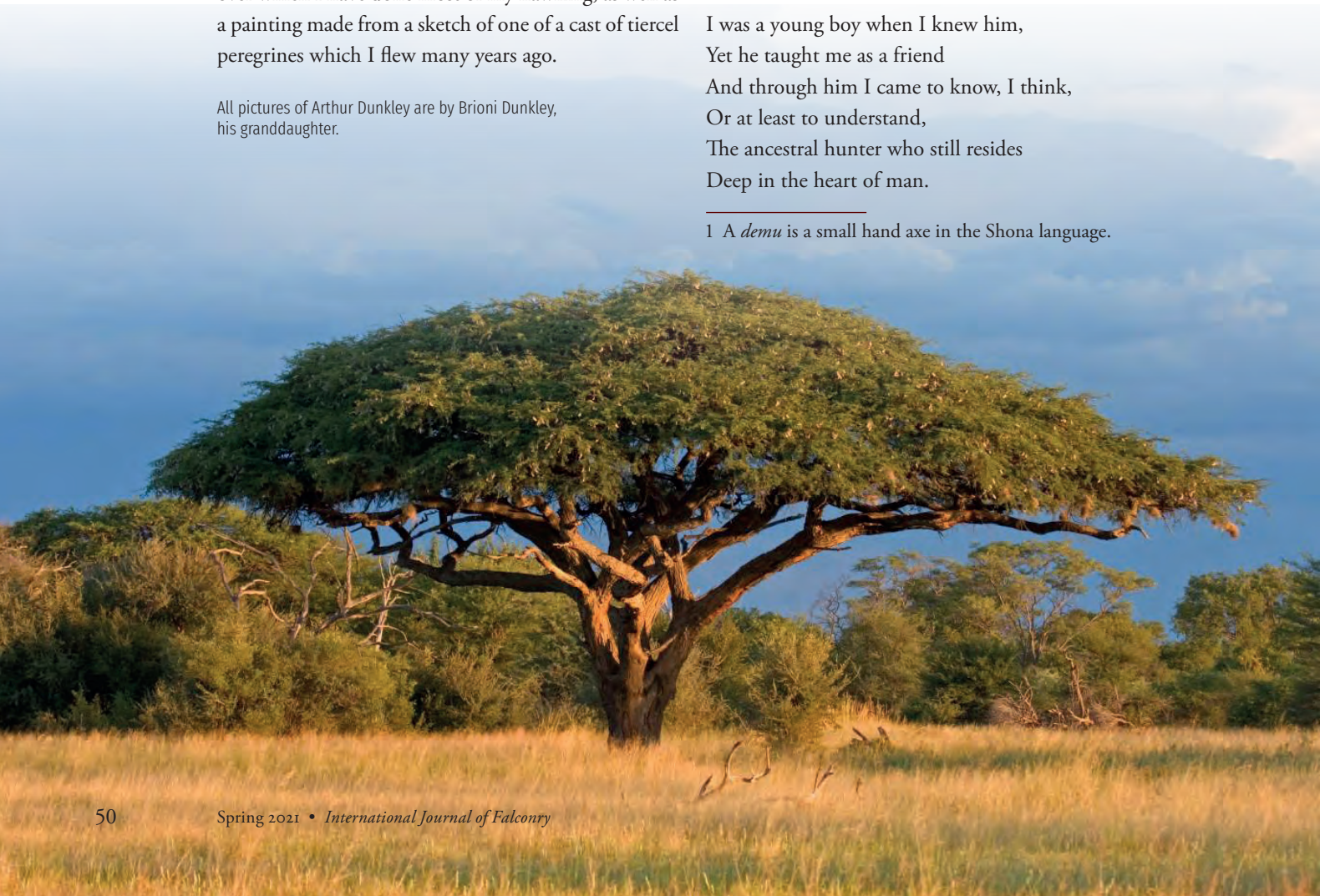
This is the man who taught me bushcraft,
Pointed at things with his bent old finger,
Showed me the things he knew.

Taught me to read the book of the bushveld,
Pellets and droppings and spoor.

Taught me how to be silent, patient,
Sensing the wind and the changing shadows
A hunter, free to the core.

I was a young boy when I knew him,
Yet he taught me as a friend
And through him I came to know, I think,
Or at least to understand,
The ancestral hunter who still resides
Deep in the heart of man.

¹ A *demu* is a small hand axe in the Shona language.





Hunting the Nile Goose with an Imprint Gyrfalcon: a Modern interpretation of Medieval Falconry?

By Xavier Morel

2020 was a strange year, by any standards, but it was a very successful season for me; one in which I discovered a new style of falconry quite unexpectedly.

My brother had bred a gyrfalcon which had not properly been reared by her parents. Consequently, Kelly and I hand-reared her from day five, with the aim of selling her later in the season. Her mother is a white gyr and her father a silver gyrkin. She is the sister of my 2019 gyrkin which flew off whilst at hack, being recovered, amazingly, in Hamburg, Germany, having flown 1,000 km in a couple of days as recounted in last year's *Journal*.

We named her *Godzilla*, and she was imprinted and hand-reared with a white gyr puppet. She was then later socially imprinted together with other falcons as much as possible in order to avoid her screaming. She eventually became quite a large falcon, at a full weight of around 1,650g.

After a couple of weeks of tame hack at home, I trained her using traditional methods and then, between mid-August and the end of September, began to train her with a quad copter in order to gain muscle and fitness. *Godzilla* became a fit falcon, climbing strongly and rapidly up to 400 metres and out-flying the drone on days of strong wind. As sales did not

look very good this year I decided to try to hunt with her, but still had to decide how to do so and which quarry species to pursue.

My team of waiting on hawks was more than complete (three gamehawks is already far too many) and so I had to think about something else, something different, that would be complementary to my existing hawking *equipment*.

The Nile goose (also known as the Egyptian goose – *Alopochen aegyptiaca*) is very common here and, since it damages grazing areas and cereal crops, besides which it can be aggressive to native wildlife, it is considered an invasive non-native species. As a result of this status, they can be hunted throughout the year; you only need the permission of the landowner.

I had accidentally taken a couple of these geese in the past with a peregrine falcon. However, as they are strong and very combative, I thought they would be a suitable, as well as an interesting match for a female gyrfalcon. They are also surprisingly fast and agile quarry, as I would discover later in the season.





Painting: *Godzilla on Goose*

Most falconers that have flown them do not advise hawking these geese since they can be dangerous quarry for a hawk to handle. However, as far as I know, nobody in Europe has really tried to take them consistently with a female gyr. Aside from the physical issues inherent in tackling these geese, the slips themselves can also constitute a danger. A slip may often result in a flight that ends far away and, as a result, it can finish on a road, in a garden with a dog, close to someone who wants to help the goose or expose participants to many other hazards.

Notwithstanding the above, with the aid of a friend we obtained three easy slips and this quickly built *Godzilla's* confidence, teaching her that this was what we wanted. This apprenticeship phase progressed quite smoothly and easily, at a weight of around 1,380g.

After her first three geese, I immediately commenced giving *Godzilla* opportunities at more geese, allowing them to get up before I unhooded her and slipped her at her quarry. My first aim was to avoid easy kills on the ground after short flights. Gradually she made longer and more spectacular flights, with the geese taking off at a great distance, but my ultimate goal was to let her go at geese in full flight.

Finally, on 16th October, the third day of attempts, weighing 1,406g and after a pursuit of 300 metres, *Godzilla* took her first goose under the properly testing conditions I sought. I was lucky enough to be there to help her out in the ensuing battle to further reinforce her confidence. I made sure never to slip her more than two or three times in an afternoon, allowing a rest time between each slip.

Gyrs are very intelligent falcons, and the last thing I wanted was for her to be discouraged by this difficult and belligerent quarry. A gyrfalcon needs to be decently rewarded if she has made a good effort, even after an unsuccessful flight. This avoids frustration, from which these big falcons can suffer. A mistake is easily made with pure gyrs, and is very difficult to correct afterwards.

As I mentioned before, my original intention was to seek long slips and I would soon discover that the geese spotted the car from a long way off, like crows do, taking off sometimes at distances of 200-300 metres. I must admit I was totally conquered! However, most of the time this certainly resulted in long, spectacular flights; ones which finished at a great distance and which you had to follow with binoculars.



Tableau *Godzilla*



The longest, and fastest, flight I had was on a day of very strong wind, about 70-80km/h. *Godzilla* followed the goose for six km as the crow flies, achieving an incredible horizontal top speed of 135km/h! I noticed that, when she is really keen, she makes horizontal top speeds of between 80 and 110km/h. At between 65 and 75km/h she is less motivated and does not really go for them.

These aesthetically spectacular flights often finish high in the sky, at between 40 and 80 metres. There were some flights in which the falcon abandoned pursuit after three or three-and-a-half km at heights of between 100 and 120 metres.

Regarding the falcon's motivation, it is important to keep this not just ever-present, but also very high. In this regard, several key factors have an influence:

- Has she had a bad experience or a big fight recently?
- Is her weight the correct one? Her average hunting weight is between 1,400g and 1,440g. Whilst she took some geese at weights of between 1,450g and 1,470g, I did notice that she was most incisive and effective at around 1,430 grams, holding the goose for longer.

- Has she taken a break? I have noticed that her motivation to hunt is greatest when she has not flown for a few days.

I reward every successful flight and kill with a full crop, giving generally one complete pigeon plus six or seven day-old chicks. She will then fast for the next day or two, until she reaches the right weight again. This allows me to fly her in quite high condition, but one in which she is driven by a *yarak* mindset. She absolutely needs this mindset as hunting these geese on a regular basis is very demanding, both physically and mentally.

Nile geese retaliate, buffeting the falcon with their wings, even when she is holding them by the head and the neck. They will then rear up and hit the falcon until she eventually lets go. I have also noticed that other geese from the group will quite often land nearby, in order to rescue the individual that has been caught.

Between 16th October and 2nd April, *Godzilla* has killed 37 geese, and at least another 25 have been caught but escaped after a hard fight on the ground.

Godzilla's 21st goose was killed after a pursuit of 3.2km, with a top speed of 100km/h, the flight climbing up to 40 metres. This was a long, powerful and clever

flight, with the gyr pretending to abandon the attack, then subsequently return to press it home even harder. She also held the goose very well on the ground, although it was fighting back and striking out very hard with its wings.

Goose number 22 was killed after a 2.5 km pursuit. *Godzilla* separated six or seven geese from the main flock, then split off two from this group before finally singling out one individual. She dominated it to a height of 50 metres, and hit it on the head. The goose lost balance whilst the gyr remounted, subsequently stooping and hitting the goose hard on the head again, causing it to fall out of the sky. It took me over ten minutes to get to her and, when I arrived, the goose was dead and the falcon completely covered with mud, but she had held on bravely.

Godzilla had two intervals of about ten days each in which she lacked motivation and killed nothing. She did actually catch her quarry in almost every flight but could not always hold the goose sufficiently long enough for me to reach her and help her. Sometimes she was unlucky and the flights ended up in the water.

After catching 14-15 geese, I did notice that she was holding them much better.

If it has been raining a lot and the terrain is very muddy she'll only be capable of having one slip, as she becomes too dirty and wet after the first tussle on the ground and is unable to fly at all after that.

Real-time GPS has been a crucial factor in these slips, enabling me to get to the falcon to help her as soon as possible. It is an exciting, emotional and spectacular type of falconry that I would recommend everyone to see at least a couple of times, as it is very enjoyable. One of the interesting aspects is that these geese nearly always try to escape by outflying the falcon and seldom try to regain cover. If they are put under pressure by the falcon, however, they will sometimes dive into in a pond or river.

On reflection, it seems that this goose hawking is, in spirit, closer to the hawking enjoyed by our medieval ancestors. In the distant past, seeking large edible game as a priority over aesthetically pleasing flights, a large falcon like a gyr must have given early falconers the ultimate hawking companion – persistent in pursuit





and powerful enough to capture and hold such quarry after long flights. Such hawking is essentially similar to that Frederick II described, flying gyrs at cranes, yet, in the modern context, it is also an effective means of controlling this pest species whilst offering a spectacular and challenging flight. Truly a modern re-interpretation of a classic form of falconry for 21st century circumstances.

Finally, within this article, you will see the painting of *Godzilla* which was a surprise gift from my fellow

falconer and good friend Shaun Bannister. The painting was an unexpected surprise and takes pride of place in my home, so I take this opportunity to thank Shaun for his very kind and generous gift. Thank you Shaun!

I will try to carry on flying *Godzilla* until the middle or end of this April, my aim being to end the season with a tally of 40 Nile geese in the game bag. If you are in my area and want to see some of these unconventional yet astonishing flights, please feel free to contact me.



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 of his hawking career 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.



Twelve Bronze Goshawks

By Yuji Mizuno Ph.D

With thanks to Frits Kleyn and Keiya Nakajima for their stimulating involvement



Tadamasu Hayashi.



The beautiful series of sculptures depicting *Twelve Bronze Goshawks* (1893) was designed by Tadamasu Hayashi (1853-1906) and produced by Chōkichi Suzuki (1848-1919), a metalwork craftsman. Hayashi was an art dealer who was a leading player in the *Japonisme* artistic movement which existed at the time in France, Belgium and the United States of America, to name its major locations. *Twelve Bronze Goshawks* was exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition (1893) held in Chicago, USA, for which Hayashi served as an advisor. To demonstrate Japan's ability within the field of fine art at the exposition, Hayashi contrived the design of the *Twelve Bronze Goshawks*. The selection of the subject for this work may have been influenced by the fact

that the exhibition would take place in the United States of America where raptors are symbolic of power, as is apparent in their national emblem of the bald eagle.

When the exposition was held, Chōkichi Suzuki was already highly regarded as an international metalwork artist inspired by birds. He had received the gold medal of the Paris World

Exposition in 1878 for his work *Incense burner with peacocks*, currently part of the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection in London. Chōkichi Suzuki was, therefore, the most appropriate person to demonstrate Japan's artistic prowess at the American exposition.

In order to prepare his sculptures, Suzuki actually kept a hawk to enable him to closely observe its habits, its bodily structure and, in particular, the various facial expressions when relaxed, preening, sleeping or agitated, for example. He aimed to faithfully show the moods and feelings of hawks through careful observation.

In addition, Suzuki was inspired by ancient Japanese paintings, namely images of hawks tethered to a high screen perch, for the creation of his *Twelve Bronze Goshawks*. These old paintings feature 12 hawks thus tethered on the type of folding screen popular amongst Japan's *samurai* class since the 16th century. It is conceivable that Suzuki decided on the number of subjects for his *Twelve Bronze Goshawks* based on the 12 hawks depicted on the folding screens.

Furthermore, it seems that Suzuki paid close attention to the colours of the metals used for his bronzes. In the accompanying brochure that was distributed at the World's Columbian Exposition, alongside a photo of each of the hawks, the metals and colours which were used in its creation are mentioned (Photos left to right: No. 1. Yellow and Green Gold; No. 2. Old Chestnut Bronze; No. 3. Polished Silver; No. 4. Platinous *Shibuichi* (an alloy of silver and

copper); No. 5. Smoked Silver; No. 6. Keichō Coin Gold; No. 7. Dark *Shibuichi*; No. 8. Seuen-tih Red Patina; No. 9. Unpolished Silver; No. 10. Wet Crow Black Shakudō; No. 11. Yellow Gold; and No. 12. Brown Alloy). These photos also show the differences in hue of each of the coloured metals used in Japan for a very long time. The differences in hue not only demonstrate a sense of colour which is uniquely Japanese, but they also modulated the hawk sculptures which otherwise would have looked monotonous at a first glance.

In March 1893, prior to the Chicago Exposition, a short three-day exhibition to unveil the *Twelve Bronze Goshawks* was held in Japan at Tokyo's Imperial Hotel, Tokyo. Francis Brinkley (1841-1912), a correspondent of the London Times, visited the exhibition and applauded Tadamas Hayashi for obtaining such a wonderful work for the Exposition in the US.

Photos of the exhibited goshawks taken at the Chicago Exposition show that cloth and cords were applied to the perch, representing the screen and the hawks' leashes. Although the original textiles are now lost, they have been recreated under the supervision of contemporary falconers for an exhibition held in the spring of 2018. Many foreign visitors, some of whom appeared to be falconers, came and admired this work of art. Sighs of wonder at the extraordinary reality of Japanese fine art could be heard. Incidentally, in February 2019, the McMullen Museum of Art held an exhibition entitled *Eaglemania: Collecting Japanese Art in Gilded Age America*. At this event the suggestion was made in public that the bronze eagle, the symbolic emblem of Boston College, might also be the work of Chōkichi Suzuki. The exhibition displayed many works of art by this artist and craftsman. We trust that through this generously illustrated exhibition catalogue you will appreciate and enjoy the high-level realism of Japanese fine art.



We are most grateful to The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan, for permission to use their photographs for this article.



YUJI
MIZUNO
Ph.D.

Yuji Mizuno is an Assistant Professor at the *University of Tsukuba* in Japan, specialising in the history of Japanese Art. In particular, he researches hunting-themed paintings in East Asia, considering their development and importance. For instance, in 16th century Japan, the new falconry culture was imported from China, although the effects of this imported culture on Japan have not, thus far, been elucidated. He is, therefore, currently investigating the actuality of this significant cultural milestone using historical documents and paintings.

Publication List:

Yuji Mizuno, 'Symbol of Power: Japanese Falconry Images (8th to 17th centuries)', in *Raptor on the fist: falconry and related imagery throughout the millennia on a global scale*, Wachholtz Verlag GmbH (2020).

A complete list of publications can be found at: <https://www.bookdepository.com/Raptor-on-fist-Oliver-Grimm/9783529014918>

Trapping and Flying Merlins on the Texas Gulf Coast

By Jim Ince

The great naturalist John James Audubon visited the Republic of Texas, arriving at Buffalo Bayou in what is now downtown Houston on May 15th, 1837. From his diary: “We landed at Houston, the capital of Texas, drenched to the skin. The Buffalo bayou had risen about six feet, and the neighbouring prairies were partly covered with water; there was a wild and desolate look cast on the surrounding scenery and Indians drunk and hallooing were stumbling about in the mud in every direction. As soon as we rose above the bank we saw before us a level of far-extending prairie, destitute of timber and of rather poor soil.”

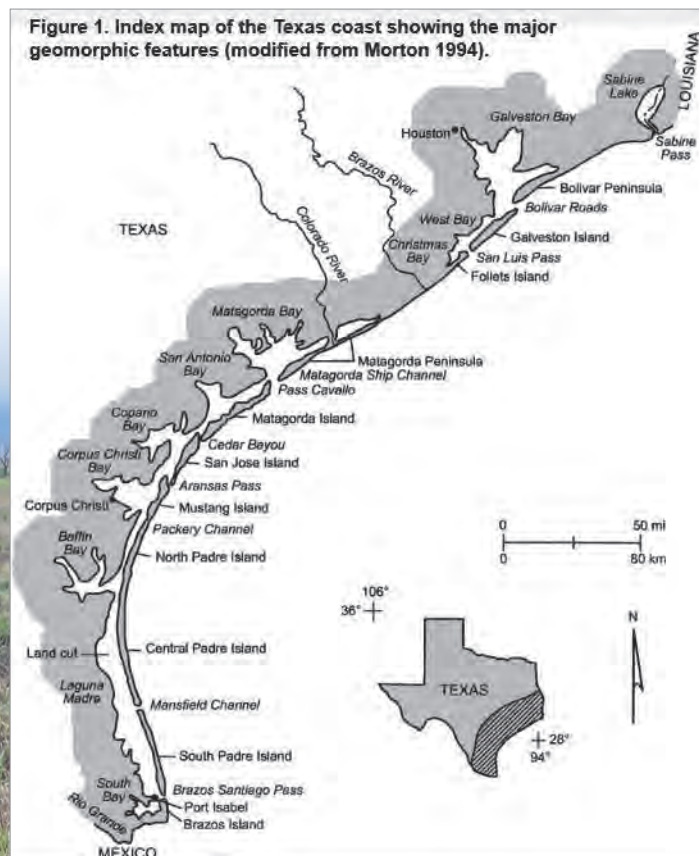
This Gulf Coast area of Texas, around Houston, where I was born and have lived most of my 73 years, was in fact a tall grass prairie at one time. The Indians are long gone but there were still prairie grouse (Attwater's prairie chickens) on the edge of town in the late 1950s when I was in grade school, and in the 60s and 70s, when I was flying passage peregrines, there were tens of thousands of pintail ducks on sheet water just west of town. There were also endless prairie potholes close to home holding a variety of ducks, and large coveys of bobwhite quail were numerous as well.

We have a very mild climate during the winter hawking months, averaging a low of 45 °F (7 °C) to a high of 65°F (18 °C), fairly ideal for flying peregrines and merlins. With the mild and temperate climate, the Gulf Coast has lots of wintering birds here, almost 350 species.

The above pretext sounds pretty promising for falconry – and it was for most of my life.

Now, with 7.1 million people and concrete and steel expanding in every direction, I often have to drive almost 30 miles from my home in suburban Southwest Houston to find suitable hawking fields; a problem I'm certain is shared by many falconers worldwide. I still fly the occasional passage tiercel peregrine, but my real passion now is flying passage merlins.

Figure 1. Index map of the Texas coast showing the major geomorphic features (modified from Morton 1994).



One of the pluses to living in Houston is that we are only about 50 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, the shores of which sport some of the best passage falcon trapping in the world. Every year, from early September to late October, a myriad of raptors travels south along the Central and Mississippi Flyways, some stopping their migration here and others travelling farther south.

I typically go merlin trapping somewhere between Galveston Island and Matagorda Island in late September. It's an interesting area; past home to the cannibalistic Karankawa Indians, who were pretty much gone by the 1860s. I'm pretty sure their spirits still remain in the swampy, mosquito infested salt grasses where I trap though. The tattooed Karankawa covered their bodies in mud and rancid alligator fat or shark liver oil to ward off the hordes of mosquitoes and black flies – fortunately we now have effective sprays like “OFF” or “DEET” that we use before entering the salt grasses to go trapping.

The only subspecies of merlin we have here is the taiga merlin (*Falco columbarius columbarius*). During the migration, the most reliable method of trapping merlins is a stationary setup using dho-gazza nets. I typically use two nets set in a “V” pattern and a 10-foot (three metre) lure pole with an English sparrow as bait. On a good day, and depending on the weather, I will see a migrating merlin about every 30 minutes from 8.00am to 12.00 noon and then again in the afternoon from 5.00pm to 7.00pm. I can usually count on catching three to four merlins in one or two days which gives me a small choice of a nice bird.

This year, 2020, as in previous years, I went down to the beach a week prior to trapping to select and prepare a trapping site. I picked a spot right behind the dunes with good visibility to the north, as the merlins tend to follow the beach when migrating south. Although merlins hunt a lot of shore birds right on the beach, they also seem to like to hunt over the salt grass right behind the beach where lots of passerines are migrating too. I haul my lawnmower down with me in order to mow a nice area in the salt grass so my nets won't get tangled in the grass when a merlin hits them. It also clears out any diamond-backed rattlesnakes that might be lurking in the grass—they are abundant here.

Manning and training passage merlins usually takes about three weeks. Some merlins are very tame and training goes quickly – too quickly. If this happens, I tend to slow things down and make sure each lesson



Carmen on screen perch. Photo by Jim Ince.

is firmly drilled into their heads. Time spent on the lure and on anti-carrying is time well spent. By week four the merlin should be ready to fly free and hunt. I also train my merlins to come to the fist, which I will justify later.

Our area does pose a few problems when flying merlins, one of which is heat/climate. This area is hot, humid and wet, and it doesn't really cool down until late November. Training in October is done in in 80 °F weather, with flying starting in November in 70 °F weather. It doesn't get into the 60s or colder until late December or January. It rarely freezes here, and the annual rainfall is 50” (127cm), so it tends to be wet and muddy. Most everyone hunts wearing rubber boots.

Another problem – and oddity – in the Gulf Coast is that we are plagued by fire ants. About 75 years ago, the red imported fire ant was accidentally brought into Alabama from South America. It has now spread to nine states including Texas. The reason I mention this is that by the time you get your merlin trained to the lure, it is still October and the weather is still very warm, making the fire ants very active. They are literally everywhere on the ground in the fields! If you call your merlin to the lure with meat tied to it, or serve her a sparrow on a short string for anti-carrying training, she could very well could be covered with fire



Carmen on
T-perch.
Photo by
Carol Ince.

ants within 30 seconds. To avoid this, I carry a small square piece of Astroturf to place on the ground on which to throw the lure or sparrow to keep the fire ants off my hawk. This becomes unnecessary when the weather cools off and the ants get cold and stay underground in their mounds.

When it comes to choice of quarry, there are a few considerations. The first chapter of my friend Matt Mullenix's new book, *Four Falconry Fundamentals*, emphasises the importance of prey base – its suitability and abundance. As I mentioned earlier, we have an amazing variety of birds wintering in this area, most having migrated here to get out of the cold weather up north. That being said, there are but a few choices of prey to hawk with your merlin here with any measured degree of success. Snipe and quail can be caught occasionally with merlins, but usually not on a regular basis.

In my younger days, I hunted a lot of mourning doves, which are a perfect match for a merlin. I even

had a merlin that learned to imitate their flight in order to get closer to them. The problem is that you have to have a very large area as the flights can go from horizon to horizon. In a suburban area, the flight will most likely end up in someone's backyard, which is trouble. Even in larger fields, if the flight ends up far away and it takes a while to get to your hawk, there is the danger of a Cooper's hawk or red-tailed hawk getting to her before you do.

Blackbirds are another consideration when it comes to suitable quarry here. This includes flocks of starlings and depredating cowbirds. These are exciting flights but, as the city has grown bigger, you have to go farther and farther into the country to find these flights. Well worth the effort if you can find them.

As I have gotten older, sparrows have become my favourite quarry. They are plentiful and the flights don't go terribly far, but they can be very aerial and spectacular. It's a prey that can be easily cached or eaten and the merlin returns to you afterwards.

In this sense, my training may differ a little from that of other merlin falconers: many see no advantage to training their merlins to come to the fist more than a couple of feet—just far enough to call them back up to the fist from the lure. This is probably because they are setting up and getting one big flight at a time—maybe starlings, blackbirds or doves. Then, they call their merlin back to the lure and are done.

In my case, I'm walking in a big open grassy field for extended periods of time and am repeatedly calling my merlin back to the fist for the next flight. In addition, I carry the merlin on a short T-perch as a vantage point from which she hunts. I'm too old and my knees are too bad to run anymore, so this allows me a leisurely walk in the field while observing some great flights at flushed sparrows. During the hunt I recall my merlin back to the fist with a yell or blow on the police whistle. I generally only pull out the lure at the end of the hunt or when the merlin completely disappears on a flight and is not returning to the glove. In addition, if my merlin takes her sparrow to a tree to eat, she will come right down to the lure when she has finished eating. This trait of returning with a sparrow in the crop is common with merlins but, once the food reaches the gut, this courtesy diminishes.

A good mixed grass field is crucial for success. My primary field this season is two miles (3.21km) in circumference and 137 acres in area, with no trees or



bushes at all—only grass. There is a nice variety of sparrows which one might categorise as slow, medium and fast. The slow sparrows are caught on the rise in short order. Medium sparrows provide great flights of up to 300 yards but are quite catchable. The fast sparrows provide fantastic flights that can go across the entire length of the field (about 800 yards), twisting, turning, high and low, but generally go uncaught as the sparrows eventually get to cover at the field's edge. My strategy is to walk to the centre of the field before unhooding the merlin, then walk along a slightly elevated dry ridge where primarily fast sparrows hang out. This way I get the long, high-quality chases first.

As the hunt continues, I work my way closer to the fence lines where more medium sparrows congregate and, if unsuccessful as the sun starts to go down, I wander into the lower, wetter areas where the slow sparrows are more prevalent.

I have flown my last three female merlins, *Lulu*, *Bernadette* and *Carmen*, in pretty much the same style, hunting sparrows from a short T-perch. *Lulu* and *Bernadette* liked to cache a lot of their quarry and were



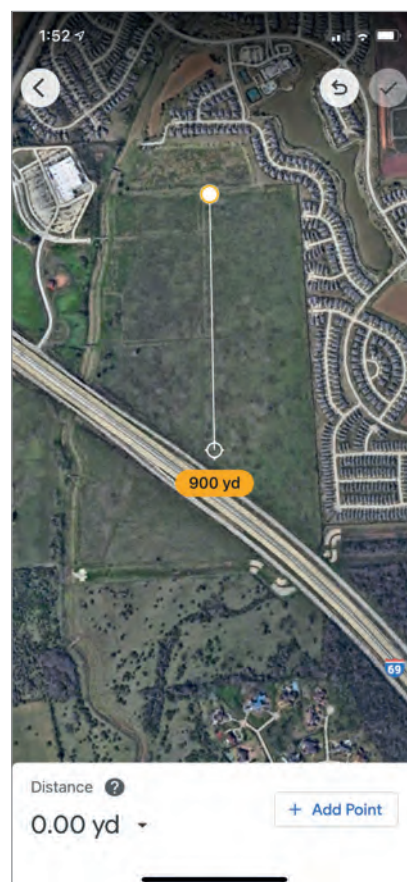
Lulu in flight with sparrow. Photo by Rob Palmer.

hunted in fields where you could easily retrieve these cached sparrows.

This year's merlin was very vocal on the first night of hood training and thus she earned the name *Carmen* (like the Spanish gypsy girl in the opera). *Carmen* is exceptionally good at catching sparrows and, as I write this in late January, has just caught her 55th. She has not been prone to caching her prey and only cached her 37th sparrow. She readily takes and eats most of her catches to a chest-high fence post from which I pick



Carmen in flight. Photo by Carol Ince.



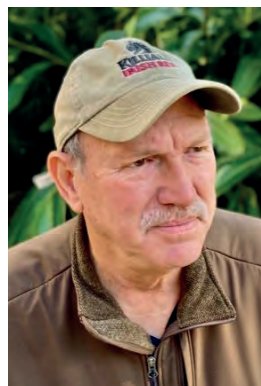
Carmen on fence post with sparrow.
Photo by Jim Ince.

her up, or up to a tree, from which she readily returns to the lure. At that point, we can either call it a day or continue to hunt, depending on her initial weight and how big the first sparrow was. The few times that *Carmen* has chased and caught sparrows beyond the perimeter of her field, she has always returned with prey in tow, to her familiar fence post, to eat it, making my job of retrieving her easy. After finishing her sparrow, *Carmen* usually comes looking for me even if I don't swing the lure. She obviously enjoys this game of hunting sparrows off the T-perch as much as I do, and she clearly knows who butters her bread!

At the end of each day as I am leaving the field with *Carmen*, I feel such privilege to have the trust of this special bird; to have her return to the fist, finish her meal, rouse, feak and allow me to hood her. It reminds me of a quote by Henry David Thoreau: *"I once had a sparrow alight upon my shoulder, while hoeing in a village garden and felt I was more distinguished by that circumstance than I should have been by any epaulet I could have worn."*

Distinguished and privileged we are indeed to share the field with these marvellous little falcons!

Carmen coming to glove.
Photo by Carol Ince.



JIM
INCE

Retired after over 50 years in engineering design and manufacture, Jim has been married for 40 years to Carol with one daughter, Laura. His falconry career began in 1962 with American kestrels, though he has also flown red-tailed hawks, European goshawks, Cooper's hawks, golden eagles, prairie falcons, merlins and peregrines. He has especially enjoyed hunting small game with passage merlins and tiercel peregrines.

A maker of fine falconry equipment, especially hoods and bells, Jim became the *Texas Hawking Club's* first Southern Director in 1970, whilst 1982 saw him become a partner in Texas' first successful peregrine breeding project. In October 1995 he was falconry representative on the City of Houston's trade mission to Abu Dhabi for a joint-proposed Houston – Abu Dhabi Sister City Task Force. This saw him convey falconry gifts to HH Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan on behalf of the City of Houston, *Texas Hawking Association* and *North American Falconers' Association*. Vice President of the *North American Falconers' Association* from 2000-2004, Jim also served as a member of the *Texas Parks and Wildlife Falconry Advisory Board* between 2000 and 2013.

A few questions

You hawk completely at sight so, it seems to me, a dog is not needed at all?

You are correct. I do not use a dog. I simply walk through the field and hope to flush sparrows as I walk.

Do your hawks carry transmitters?

Yes, I use a small, three gram transmitter attached to one leg. I am using a Marshall Micro transmitter at present; 434mhz.

How does your season look? Do you need a license for hawking and trapping?

I am planning on releasing my merlin within the next week. I've had a good season with her. I will probably release her in the same field where I primarily hunt her.¹ She will probably stay there until late March or early April, then start her migration back north. Yes, we have to have a falconry license to practice falconry and hunt with our hawks. There are only certain passage birds that need a special trapping permit (peregrines). Passage peregrines, Harris's hawks, gyrs and goshawks have to be banded after capture.

Are you the only merlin specialist in your part of Texas or your club, or are there any others as well?

How does the other hawking around you look?

As far as I know, I'm the only person who traps and flies merlins on a regular basis here in Texas. There used to be good hawking around me, but things are getting very developed. I have flown mostly peregrines for 60 years, so I have hawked a lot of ducks, quail and snipe. It's too hot and wet here for pheasants, so they were never successfully introduced in the coastal areas of Texas.

¹ I released *Carmen* on February 8, 2021. She ended up catching 64 sparrows and one blackbird.



Mowing the coastal trapping spot.
Photo by Mike Wiegel.



On a rock –
peregrine.



BERND PÖPPELMANN, PAINTER AND ILLUSTRATOR

Observing wild animals in nature and capturing this experience with pencil or brush, whilst experimenting with light, colour and composition, has been crucial to me all my life. Even as a child, it always made me happy. I was a rather lively child but, when I was painting, I became quiet. To be outside in nature was always the greatest pleasure for me.

Later, many kinds of animals populated my aviaries: owls, partridges, various songbirds, different species of raptors, and even mammals like martens and young foxes. Opportunities to study animals at close range were always essential for my artistic development, for how can one understand an animal if he has not held it in the hand or been close to it? Having first become acquainted with falconry at the *Deutscher Falkenorden's* 1966 international meeting at Burgsteinfurt, it was not long before I obtained my first wild sparrowhawk at 18 years of age.

As a young man, I roamed the fields of the Münsterland region with my sparrowhawk, strolling along the farmlands and hedgerows and outwitting the sly sparrows and nimble blackbirds by skilfully positioning myself with the hawk. In this way, I was able to watch the rapid and exciting flights of the quarry and the hawk with my own eyes. These wild-



Photo: Walter Bednarek

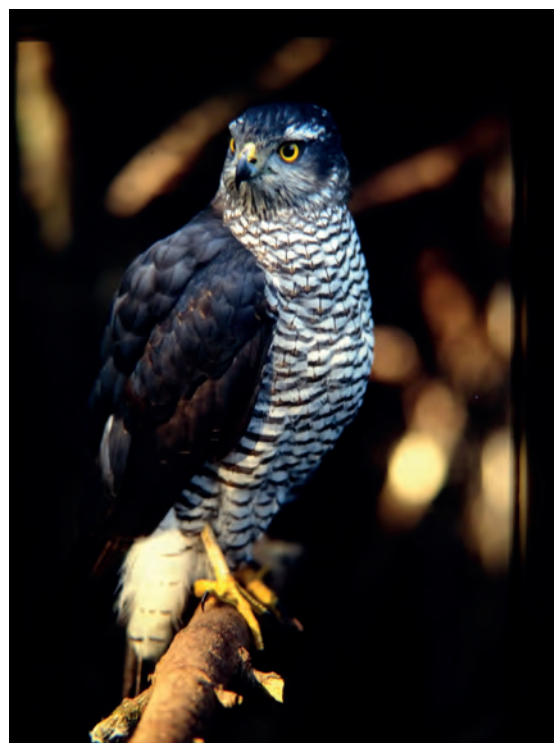
taken sparrowhawks were released at the end of the season, but at the end of the 1970s, when pesticides reduced numbers of wild hawks and their quarry also decreased, I took to flying goshawks and bred my own sparrowhawks.

In my aviaries I bred sparrowhawks, goshawks and merlins and, each year, would use an immature female hawk for hawking. In 1993, my friend Heinz Brüning and I experimented with artificial insemination with my imprint female sparrowhawk and his tiercel goshawk. Our first attempt failed but, in 1994, when examining the four eggs after about three weeks of incubation, I found life in them. Four hybrid chicks hatched, and we hunted crows with them. We may have been the first breeders worldwide to breed gos x sparrowhawk hybrids.

To earn a living, I became a civil servant in the district administration which prevented me from painting until very late at night after work. However, in the 1980s, I was given the chance to illustrate books and finally, in 1988, I decided to establish myself as a professional artist. My parents were shocked when they learned that I had given up my secure position in the civil administration and, indeed, it took many years before I was able to achieve the professional painting that I always had in mind. I was constantly searching for ideas and ways to capture subjects realistically in my paintings—an animal's charisma, the liveliness of birds, the softness of their plumage and so on. Each painting should convey a convincing impression of naturalness.

As a painter of birds, I have always attached great importance to properly depicting their plumage which necessitates knowledge of the functional structure of feathers. To achieve this naturalness, I worked out parts of the plumage very precisely while treating other parts with less detail.

From 1998 onwards, I would attend the *British Falconry Fair* to exhibit my work annually. In 2002,



Hybrid sparrowhawk x goshawk after the first moult in 1995.

Together with the artist Claus Rabba, I became one of two 'artists in residence' at Gloucester's *Nature in Art Museum* and gallery, which is dedicated to nature-inspired art in all its forms. Although my personal interest is not exclusively centred on raptors, but includes the entire animal world, I will always enjoy painting a hawk or falcon.

My work is featured in private collections, galleries and museums in a number of countries, and the Sultan of Oman has the largest collection of my paintings abroad. I am proud to have received awards for my work at national and international exhibitions.



Hunting goldfinches – male sparrowhawk.



Peregrine – tree breeder project in Poland.

Pushed into the corner – gyrfalcon hunting grouse.



Peregrine from the Rhine.



Gyrfalcon.

The last leaf – goshawk.



On radio tower – peregrines.

Saker falcon.



Northern goshawks.



Pair of goshawks.



Pair of goshawks.



Hawking in the time of Covid

By Eric Witkowski

For us in Ireland, the past season has been a most unusual one. We did not hold a single field meet, despite having made plans for quite a few of them earlier in the year. The pandemic situation led to limitations on our movements around the country and isolated me from many of my good flying areas. I started training for my snipe hawking season at the end of July with a new Irish tiercel, bred by a fellow snipe hawker from Ireland's midlands, Bruce Wilkie. Tragically, Bruce passed away suddenly just a few weeks after selling me the bird, and so never got to see the progress of his home-bred tiercel. Bruce was a keen falconer, flying a cracking tiercel over the previous few seasons and he must have been looking forward to flying the same bird again once he had moulted.

When training started, my tiercel's weight prior to feeding was 660g, which was the same as that of my previous Irish tiercels. Lure training went well but hood training did not. From the start, he wasn't happy being hooded and that attitude never changed. This tiercel turned out to be the most difficult of all the falcons I have ever trained to make to the hood; like a goshawk, he would fight it on every occasion. In spite of this, after

a couple of weeks of training, he was ready to fly free. By the first week of September, I felt that he was strong enough to be shown snipe. However, at this time of the year, they are scarce in Ireland with just some of the resident snipe holding on in swampy, overgrown places that are difficult to fly. They are also very familiar with the landscape and know where to safely bail out from stooping falcons. Being familiar with these drawbacks, I had little hope of success and I really just wanted to test my tiercel's focus and stamina.

After flying to a dropped lure, his initial pitch wasn't impressive, flying up only to around 40-50m. It was high enough to begin hawking with and it improved gradually every time he was served a snipe, at which he appeared very keen to stoop. Although most of the quarry managed to escape, a few flights were good and he tried really hard, tail-chasing into the sky after missing in the stoop. Finally, he bagged his first snipe on 18th September. I knew from experience with my previous tiercels that a first snipe kill is a big event for any eyass peregrine. From this point on, I expected him to improve a lot in terms of making another kill.

As winter slowly approached, we were able to find more and more snipe. However, after the tiercel's first kill, the expected improvement in performance didn't come. He stooped at and chased quite a few more but without any luck, at which stage I began to worry that he might begin to lose his confidence in taking snipe. Confidence is probably the most critical attribute for success in this challenging branch of falconry. I was happy with his wing power and speed, and he was often flown hard for 20 to 30 minutes, but there was an obvious deficiency in his footing skills. Patience being one of the most important qualities a falconer has to possess, I persevered and kept giving him opportunities. He killed his second snipe eight days after his first; not a spectacular kill but I was glad to have it. Unfortunately, he chose this time to demonstrate his potential to carry prey. The snipe's small size makes carrying an easy vice for a tiercel to acquire, although peregrines tend not to carry unless in danger of being robbed. This tiercel, however, had the tendency to carry right from the very beginning and, after a few more kills, I realised this had become a major issue with him; an issue which never changed in his first season. It became especially risky to fly him in mountainous areas or near rivers. On one memorable day, having killed a snipe at the bottom of a mountain, he picked it up and carried it 400m to the summit. Believe me, it wasn't a pleasant climb!

At the beginning of October, I took up an older tiercel, bred by Matt Gage in the UK, for his third season flying at snipe. At the end of his first season he had been gradually becoming a good snipe hawk and I had been looking forward to flying him the following



year. Unfortunately, moulting problems delayed the start of his season to around Christmastime and, thereafter, his performance wasn't as expected.

His second moult had gone well and he was ready for hawking just as snipe began to appear in larger numbers. At first, progress was slow which was quite unusual: once a tiercel is made to a quarry, it usually performs well in the following seasons. Some days were better than others but there were occasions when he simply blanked the snipe. On good days, I was able to see some progress and, in time, there were a few kills





but I couldn't see any great enthusiasm from him. This changed in mid-December when he bagged six snipe in seven days. This was his breakthrough.

A similar change happened with my immature hawk. At the beginning of December, he had become notably keener on snipe; a welcome improvement after weeks of poor enthusiasm when, frustratingly, he regularly blanked them completely. I knew that focusing on one type of prey was the key to success and that if I was to introduce him to an easier quarry



species, he would immediately give up on snipe. After a few good days when he killed his snipe from a low to a medium pitch, my expectations rose that higher pitches would follow. I believe a pitch of between 50 and 90m is the best for an inexperienced hawk to get going on snipe. When a satisfactory level of confidence is achieved, I raise the bar, letting them climb higher.

I knew from past experience with previous tiercel that stoops from above 150m are rarely successful. The

greater speed achieved from these higher pitches may not always allow the tiercel to react successfully to the snipe's jinks. This season, I wanted to try something more challenging by serving the tiercel only when they had reached heights above 150m. Thanks to the availability of GPS systems nowadays, it is possible to establish the exact position and altitude of one's tiercel. In the case of the intermewed tiercel, his success rate dropped significantly at the higher pitches. From killing six snipe





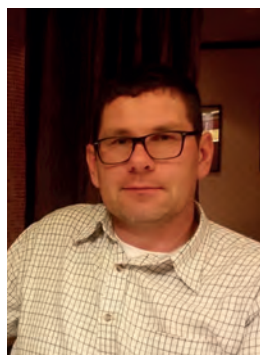
in seven days when at a pitch of 90-150m, he killed just one to two snipe a week from the higher altitudes. The brown tiercel somehow adapted much quicker and became very successful, taking a higher number of snipe each week with many taken in the first stoop. One day he killed from his highest pitch of over 240m which I realised was an important milestone. From that day on, he killed snipe from a good pitch regularly.

To achieve success from these high pitches, both tiercels had to adapt to different killing techniques. This can be seen in slow-motion videos which I took during the season. While flying at a lower pitch, my previous tiercels were able to react to changes in the snipe's trajectory and followed with a quick leg snatch to catch their quarry. Footing ability for a successful kill using that method had to be amazing. My current tiercels, flying at higher pitches, had no choice but to adopt a different way, as they stooped with speeds from 200 to over 250km/h which left them no chance of rapidly changing flight direction. Instead, both focused on the snipe's flight pattern in order to predict where their paths would cross. In the past, knowing that snipe can move fast in any direction, I didn't expect this would be successful, but my current tiercels proved it could be done. Both developed efficient ways of killing snipe at these higher speeds. Somehow, my old tiercel was able to direct the snipe into a desired position and kill with an angled strike. I saw a similar ability from my brown tiercel.

The last few weeks of the season are always best. Hawks fly in superb condition, above their chamber weight, yet so confident and efficient in the hunt while flying at a good pitch. On one occasion, my brown tiercel amazed me with four stoops in one flight, all from between 170 and 230m. He didn't make a kill that day as the first two snipe bailed and the others jinked and made their escape. Another day, he got his warm meal after a 180m stoop, then carried it off. I saw him land a few hundred metres away and began to make my way towards him, then noticed the GPS signal move over forestry to land 1.5km away. It was a difficult walk through high grass and soft ground. When I got nearer, I saw him come over me. I thought he might still be carrying his snipe but no; he came back to a dead pigeon without his quarry. Initially, I thought he may have been robbed by ravens or even a wild falcon. With his vice of carrying and being quite possessive over food, I never expected he would have stashed his prey, but he had! We went to the spot where he had landed and found an untouched snipe. No feather had even been plucked! It was a nice surprise after his slow start to snipe hawking. Both tiercels gave me much joy this season, along with many head-scratching days at the beginning, but nothing is easy in this very challenging branch of falconry.

Snipe hawking on Irish bogs is hard to imagine without very good pointing dogs. My breed of choice is the Irish red setter. *Max* is four years old, and already well-experienced, and *Axel*, at almost ten years old, is slowly heading towards retirement. Both are excellent at finding snipe; they work wide and fast and can run hard and tirelessly all day without a break. Good snipe hawking dogs must be steady on point, sometimes holding it for long periods. They must flush on command even at a long distance from the falconer. I am already thinking about *Axel's* successor and am considering an Irish red and white setter as pointers aren't really my cup of tea. From what I've seen this past season, both tiercels look very promising for the future. I am keeping my fingers crossed for a clean moult and already looking forward to next season.

All photos are by author, with the exception of photo on page 69 (bottom) which is by Don Ryan.



ERIC
WITKOWSKI

My first contact with falconry was at Forestry School in Zagnansk, central-south Poland, back in 1995. I started off with a rehabilitated buzzard followed by a number of goshawks. After completing school, I moved to Warsaw for further forestry studies and continued hunting with my excellent goshawk, flying mainly at pheasants.

In 2005, I arrived in Ireland hoping to make some quick money and return home after a year or two but, 16 years later, I'm still living here. Initially, I flew a few goshawks with varying success, then finally obtained my first tiercel peregrine. Inspired by Martin Brereton and his tiercel's wonderful flying, I decided to try my hand at snipe hawking, having bought and trained my first red setter the year before the tiercel arrived. After a difficult first two years, he turned out to be an excellent snipe hawk, taking them daily and, when flown in high condition, often catching them while he flew and hunted again.

I bought my second tiercel three years later as a backup for the other. He was also a very good hawk, but flew and hunted in a very different style. Sadly, both died in a terrible three-day period in totally unrelated incidents. The next tiercel I took on was an import from Matt Gage, who offered me one from his high-flying grouse hawk bloodline in the UK. I was happy indeed to take it on as there were no peregrines available in Ireland. He was a fantastic tiercel with the outstanding footing ability needed for snipe hawking and very successful on snipe but, unfortunately, I lost him after the season ended. I later flew two more tiercels from that same line but, whilst good, successful hawks, they were not the equal of that first one. This past season, I have been flying one of Matt Gage's three year old tiercels and a brown Irish tiercel bred by the late Bruce Wilkie. After a slow beginning, the young bird turned out to be a very good, high-flying, tiercel and had many spectacular kills. His performances reminded me again of the importance of motivation and confidence when it comes to achieving success in any endeavour.

In my early years of snipe hawking, my goal was simply to catch a snipe with a falcon. Later, it was to take them more frequently so that bag size became the new goal. When I reached the stage of taking them in good numbers, then I began to think about how to do it all in a more challenging style. I understood that it would be much more difficult for a tiercel to have similar success from a higher pitch than from the lower flights with multiple stoops. With higher pitches, the size of the bog being flown also becomes an issue: the higher the tiercel flies, the larger the bog needs to be.

To my mind, a successful hawk is one able to kill snipe daily but my expectations have evolved over the years. Now, I enjoy the flight's style more than a kill at the end of it. I am also less inclined to go out daily as I used to. Our priorities are forever changing, especially as we get older. I still like to get a few kills a week but do not agonise too much anymore on the days when it doesn't all happen. If the quality of the flight has been good, it is all much easier to take. As it happens, not focusing on the kill can help one's tiercel's style to improve. Sometimes, I have called him down to the lure when he has not flown as expected and I believe he understood that things were not living up to my expectations: he improved his flying in the following days. I think this is better than serving your hawk in a less than perfect position because you are so keen to see that stoop. It seems to have paid off as he is the first of my snipe hawks to kill regularly from a pitch of over 150m. For our next season, I have an even more ambitious goal – but that will be another story.





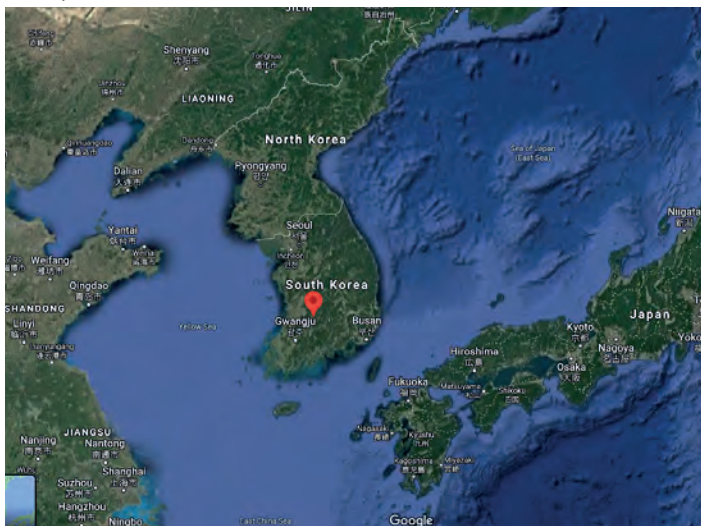
THE HISTORY OF FALCONRY IN JINAN, SOUTH KOREA

By Dongseok Woo and An-Seon Kim

Jinan is an area of outstanding natural beauty in the Jeollabuk-do province in the south of the divided Korean Peninsula. It is an elevated plateau, surrounded by plains and mountains on all sides; a landscape in which agriculture and forestry have been the basis for life for hundreds of years. The lofty land of this region is well suited to the cultivation of a number of special products for which Jinan is renowned: ginseng, deodeok (lanceolate) root, shiitake mushrooms and delicious top-grade hot peppers. It is also famed for the raising of black pigs. Geographically, the area is somewhat isolated from the rest of the Korean Peninsula and it is also the only place where traditional Korean falconry remains intact today. This tradition, however, is in danger of disappearing: it is at risk for many reasons but chiefly because of the rapid industrialisation that has occurred in the modern era. Along with the effects of conflict in the region in the recent past, this has led to many changes in the social structures of the area.

One traditional feature of falconry culture in this part of Asia has long been the practice of collective hawking. This saw the landlords, who had economic wealth and power, engaging the local country people to assist in their sport. As well as members of the rural population being employed to acquire and train the hawks used, they would actively participate in the actual

Jinan's
location on
the map.



Young-tae Jeon and his wife.

hawking itself as beaters to flush quarry and markers to follow flights. Until the 1980s, this falconry culture still persisted in many places in Korea, but it is only in Jinan that the traditions and customs have managed to retain their pure original form until the present. This is probably due to Jinan's geographical isolation and, as a consequence of this, the region's slower economic and social development.

Young-tae Jeon (1916-2006) was a leader in the region, prominent because of his great wealth. His family had, for generations, owned large tracts of land

and operated the only water mill in town of Baegun in Jinan. His ancestors strengthened their ties with the local community by organising hawking events every winter. These included participation from the local peasants who farmed the family's land, and did much to engender a shared sense of belonging. Like many of his ancestors before him, Young-tae Jeon had greatly enjoyed falconry from his youth, actively participating from the age of 19 years old. Again like his ancestors, in common with most falconry cultures worldwide in which wealthy patrons of the sport required assistance to obtain, train and maintain their hawks, he benefitted greatly from the skills of a professional falconer with a sound grounding in traditional practice.

Mr Jeon's professional falconer was a very talented fellow inhabitant of his village, Yong-ki Kim(1920-2004), who spent his lifetime assisting him with, and enlightening him about, all aspects of falconry and its practice, from the trapping and training of wild hawks to their successful employment in the hawking field. Kim himself was uneducated and lived the life of a peasant farmer but he was a most adept falconer. In fact, he was a legendary figure amongst other Korean falconers, who marvelled at his many skills. He was not only adept at making traps, weaving nets and climbing cliffs and mountainsides to trap wild goshawks, but he was also expertly efficient in their training and hunting with them. The techniques and practices that Kim used had been inherited from the traditional falconry culture of northeast Asia.



Young-tae Jeon.





Another Jinan falconer Mr. Bok-dong Shin.



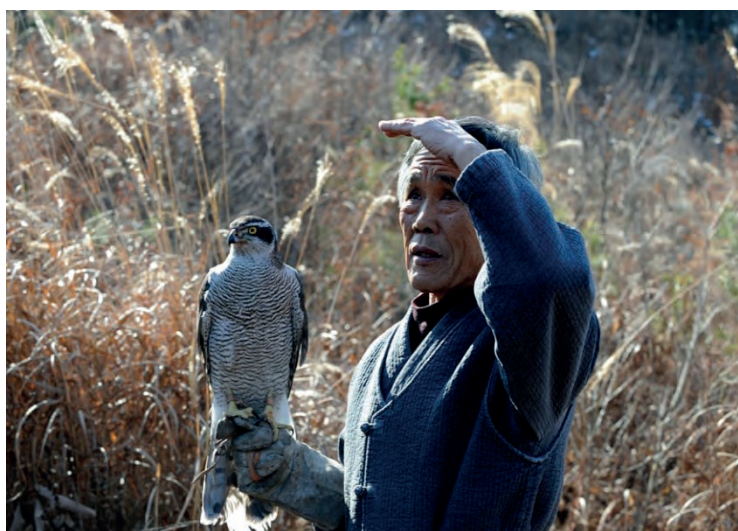
DONG-SEOK
WOO

Dong-Seok Woo was born in 1969 in Busan, Korea. He is a researcher of the falconry culture of northeast Asia and an illustrator, having majored in graphic design when at university. He is the designated, official member of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Traditional Falconry in the province of Jeollabuk-do, Korea. His interest in falconry arose when he worked in the rehabilitation of birds of prey while carrying out wild bird protection activities, under the influence of his father who is an ornithologist.



AN-SEON
KIM

An-Seon Kim was born in 1973 in Jinan, Jeollabuk-do, Korea. She graduated from the Jeonbuk National University, Department of Forestry, and is a researcher of falconry culture, working at the Jeollabuk-do Forest Environmental Research Institute. She is currently receiving training at the Korean Folk Falconry Association.



Jeong-oh Park.



Young-tae Jeon and Yong-ki Kim.

In the late 1990s, in accordance with the Korean government's policy of supporting the maintenance of traditional Korean culture, the practice of falconry in Jinan was designated as an intangible cultural heritage of the Province of Jeollabuk. This recognition led to Mr Young-tae Jeon, as a *bongbajee* (a falconer who was leader of the traditional hawking parties), being selected as the first acting custodian of Jeollabuk Province's Intangible Cultural Heritage, which then received much governmental support. Sadly, however, Mr Yong-ki Kim, despite having helped, guided and instructed Mr Jeon in the art of falconry throughout his life, was unfortunately precluded from all the benefits of this award. With the restoration and further development of traditional Korean falconry under the full gaze of the modern mass media, Mr Jeon went on to become an icon of our country's traditional falconry. He was greatly supported in this by his wife, Bo-soon Lee, who served as his assistant in all of his ventures in rearing and training hawks and was always a great stalwart by his side. In this respect, and many others, Mr Jeon was indeed a blessed person throughout his life. After Mr Jeon's death, Jeong-oh Park (1941-), another former pupil of Mr Kim, has taken on his role, maintaining the heritage of Jinan's falconry culture to be passed on to future generations.



THE ROYAL FALCONRY OF SALVATERRA DE MAGOS IN PORTUGAL

By Patricia Leite (in collaboration with Prof. Doutora Natália Correia Guedes).

With thanks to Pedro Afonso, Presidente PFA

In this text, we invite the reader to accompany us on a virtual *stoop* back to 18th century Portugal. Dom José I, King of Portugal (1714-1777), who was married to the Spanish Infanta D. Mariana Vitória, ordered the construction of a royal falconry establishment, in Salvaterra de Magos.

The village is located near Lisbon and was thus easily accessible to royal visitors by rowing barque or brigantine following the Tagus and Sorraia rivers. Primarily, its location offered excellent hawking grounds with perfect visibility on the vast open plains nearby. Royal falconry had a great impact on everyday life in the village and the neighbouring counties. The entire population would be summoned and enlisted as scouts and watchmen for a royal hawking party, without being allowed to participate in the actual hunt. Both the nobility and the ordinary peasants each had a specific part to play in a uniquely beautiful spectacle: the finely balanced contest between the hawk and her quarry. In this way the participants were introduced to the notion of a balanced environment, two centuries before the concepts of ecological balance and conservation would become generally accepted.

At that time, falconry was preferred to shooting despite being incomparably more complex. Ample practice was required for mastery of training and

maintaining the hawks that were used, whilst the exquisite paraphernalia that, over time, became a part of the sport involved dedicated preparation and production. These included not just the usual falconry furniture, but also horses used to follow the flights and, in this case, costumes worn by the participants and even instruments, the *charamelas*, played by musicians accompanying the hawking parties. A study by Joaquim da Silva Correia and Natália Correia Guedes established

*Falcoaria Real
Salvaterra
de Magos.
Photo by
Fotografia
Rui Carvalho
Salva terra
de Magos.*





to Portugal at the instruction of the King of Denmark, delivering a diplomatic gift of falcons. As most of these falcons originated from Iceland, they must have been gyrfalcons. The *falcoaria real* buildings formed an integral part of a royal palace which, during autumn and winter, accommodated the most illustrious nobility as well as the ambassadors, artists and opera singers that accompanied the royal party.

Falconry has been practiced in Portugal since the formation of the kingdom in the 12th century and was probably introduced by the former Arab overlords of the territory. Over centuries, hunting with hawks suffered many vicissitudes, almost becoming extinct during the era of Spanish domination under King Philip of Spain. Once independence was restored in 1640, the sport began to recover.

Thanks to the country's excellent financial situation in the following century, the art of falconry blazed brightly again, justifying the construction of a dedicated falconry establishment. We cannot give a precise date for its construction but know that, in 1752, ten Dutch falconers from Valkenswaard, in Brabant, arrived in Salvaterra where they established themselves to take the royal falconry in hand. The *falcoaria real* consisted of three divisions, each under a master falconer answerable to the King's huntsman. Some of the falconers settled in the village and married Portuguese wives. Their descendants can still be identified to this date. Although their Dutch family names like Verhoeven, Bekkers or Weymans, to name a few, did not persist in time, we can still identify Portuguese families descended directly from these Dutch falconers. Prof. Doutora Natália Correia Guedes' family are descendants of João Guilherme Verhoeven.

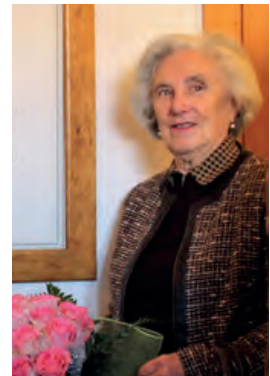
that the falconers of Salvaterra wore a livery jacket with golden buttons, a tricorn hat, a white linen shirt and a belt with a gilt brass buckle.

The buildings of the *falcoaria real* of Salvaterra de Magos were constructed to a design which was clearly influenced by the architectural Pombalino style, typical for the period of the reconstruction of Lisbon, Marquis of Pombal. It became the base for falconers from the Low Countries, the present Netherlands, who had come

Photo credits: Miguel Cardoso.



Joaquim da Silva Correia.



Natalia Correia Guedes.

In the same year that the Dutch falconers arrived in Salvaterra (1752), Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquis of Pombal and royal Secretary of State, received diplomatic correspondence from the Imperial court in Vienna, Austria. This contained detailed information about the ways in which falconry was practiced at the courts of other European kingdoms and especially praised the expertise of the falconers in the King of Denmark's service.

In 1765, 60 hawks arrived in Salvaterra, transported from Amsterdam to Lisbon under the authority of the

master falconer of the King of Denmark, who had arranged their capture in Iceland. In addition to the three divisions allocated to the falcons, the building was also equipped with dwellings for the falconers and their families and lofts for the breeding of pigeons that served as hawk food. One of these lofts was vaulted, with a circular plan and 305 nests. It is also recorded that the Grand Master of the Order of Malta annually presented the Portuguese monarch with falcons captured in Iceland.

We know from the records that in 1772, after the death of Henrique Weymans, the *falcoaria real* functioned with only two divisions under two master falconers, Jacob Francisco and Henrique Verhoeven. Between them, they had in their service six falconers and a further three falconry apprentices.

The Portuguese royal family's departure to Brazil and the political instability that pervaded the country in the 1820s and 1830s exacerbated the decline of the sport of falconry which was subsequently abandoned. On



Falcoaria Real
Salvaterra
de Magos. Photo
by Fotografia Rui
Carvalho Salva terra
de Magos.





Falconry scene tiles from the *Palácio de Correio Mor* in Loures.



Falconry scene tiles from the *Palácio dos Condes de Barbacena*, in Lisbon.

restore the former *falcoaria real*. Owner the Count of Monte Real was persuaded, after initial reluctance, to sell the property to the City Council in 1990, facilitating development of an information centre to preserve the memory of a golden age of Portuguese, and indeed wider European, falconry. Meanwhile, 2014 saw the Municipality of Salvaterra de Magos brand itself “National Capital of Falconry”. In 2016, UNESCO accepted a submission supported by the University of Évora and the *Portuguese Falconry Association* for Portugal’s inclusion on UNESCO’s list of countries for which falconry is recognised as part of humanity’s intangible cultural heritage. The following year, a documentation centre named after Natalia Correia Guedes and Joaquim da Silva Correia, in acknowledgment of the pivotal role they played in its development, was opened to house research records. Finally, after significant restoration, the *falcoaria real* opened to the public in 2019, with falcons and falconers on site to enlighten visitors about the art of falconry and the building’s history.

Today, the *falcoaria real* is one of Salvaterra’s key attractions, providing guided tours and flight demonstrations. It has two rooms with exhibitions on hunting and falconry. About 25 birds of prey of different species are kept there permanently for visitors to learn all about them, their habitat and their place in the natural order. They can see them being flown, learn of the equipment and techniques that are used in their training and, the long history and practice of this wonderful sport in Portugal.

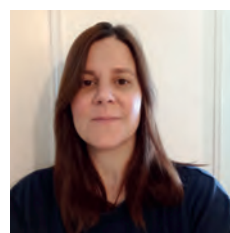
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February 8th, 1821, the abolition of the hawking grounds and sporting rights was decreed and all offices related to its administration and guardianship were abolished. A month later, the regency of the Kingdom ordered the abolition of “*all trades, duties and wages of persons employed at the falcoaria real*”. This decision precipitated the consequent sale of the falconry building by public auction.

In 1953, the Portuguese government protected the building as being *of public interest*, but it was only in the late twentieth century that significant steps were taken for its recovery. 1989 saw the decisive publication of *The Royal Palace of Salvaterra de Magos: the Court, the Opera and the Falconry* by Prof. Dr. Natália Correia Guedes. Based upon decades of research at the Portuguese National Archives by her father, Joaquim da Silva Correia, it made a critical contribution to the study and preservation of falconry in Portugal, and was re-published in 2018 by the Municipality of Salvaterra de Magos.

Joaquim da Silva Correia and Natália Correia Guedes are, themselves, part of Portuguese falconry’s history, with Natália becoming the *Portuguese Falconry Association’s* first president. Plans were put in place to



PATRICIA LEITE

Patricia holds a degree in History and a master’s in Museology from the University of Evora in Portugal.

Employed by the civil administration of Salvaterra de Magos, she is responsible for the *Falcoaria Real*.



Dutch Falconers at the Portuguese Court: a shared heritage.

By Dr. J.M.P van Oorschot

(The following text is an excerpt from Dr. van Oorschot's thesis 1974, *Royal Flyers and Falconers from Valkenswaard since the 17th century*)

Portugal

In 1752, the name of Portugal began to appear on the delivery lists of the Danish court of diplomatic falcon gifts. Although there is sufficient evidence to suggest hawking existed on the other part of the Iberian Peninsula prior to 1752, our knowledge of the quality and quantity of this 'other' falconry is minimal. Aert Timmermans from Arendonk, whose son Philip would move to Valkenswaard, was already employed in 1707 as falconer at the royal court of Portugal.

Although the Portuguese archives probably still hide relevant material in 'Egyptian darkness', we know from Danish and Dutch sources that the rebirth of falconry at the court of Bragança, the ruling dynasty, was supervised by Valkenswaarders. The virtual falconry dynasties of Hertroys, Verhoeven and Weymans, plus individually, Jacobus van der Eynden, all played a role in the renaissance of Portuguese hawking.



Hoffaltoniermeister Verhoeven. In Dutch, Hendrik Verhoeven.



Painting of Schloss Fasanerie Museum. Falconry scenes from the estate of the Duke of Waldeck. The mounted falconer in the middle of the scene, seen from behind, is Hendrik Verhoeven.

The brothers Willem and Jacobus Hertroys made their fortune at the court of Lisbon. In the case of Willem, we are able to describe his wealth, which amounted to six thousand guilders. His nephew, Jan Hertroys, also found the road to Portugal, where he married the Portuguese Anna Maria da Conceicao, with whom he had six children.

Jacobus Verhoeven, whose services were used at almost all the courts of Europe before succeeding his stepfather as master falconer in Denmark, was, according to a letter of 1754, connected with Portuguese falconry in the previous two years. During that time he was instructed by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Don Sebastiao Jose de Carvalho e Melo, to deliver the gift of Danish falcons to Portugal.

When, in 1755, Jacobus Verhoeven was placed in charge of Danish falconry, the warm relations with his old superior in Portugal continued, as was obvious from the rising number of falcons presented to Lisbon. As further evidence of the good relations that continued to exist, Jacobus' two sons, Hendrik and Johannes Verhoeven, were appointed falconers to the Portuguese king. Together with their uncle Jacobus Cornoudus, brother of Jacobus Verhoeven's wife Antonetta, they lived in Salvaterra de Magos.





17th century Dutch painting of gyrfalcon, with hood, artist unknown. *Museum Prinsenhof, Delft.*

Initially, it was the Portuguese ambassador in The Hague, de Mello, who conducted the correspondence regarding the allocation and transport of the falcon gift. In 1779, it was Jan Gildemeester Jansz, consul-general of the Portuguese court in Amsterdam, who arranged the request and shipment with the Danish Grand Hunting Master, Baron Von Gram. Although sometimes shipment by warship took place, as a rule, transport over land was more common. This did not, however, always go without problems, as is evident in 1765, when the accompanying falconer was put out of circulation due to a fall from his horse. In another case, when the shipped falcons failed to arrive in Portugal on time, Jan Hendrik Verhoeven was sent out to investigate.

In 1760 Jacobus Weymans, a falconer apprentice, was charged with delivering falcons. Another member of this family was Willem Peter Nicolaes Weymans, who was already employed in Portugal in 1754. Jacobus'

son Hendrik also moved to Salvaterra de Magos, where he continued to live until his death in 1772. The fifteen parcels of real estate which he left behind amounted to a value of 1,380 guilders and were barely sufficient to cover his family members' debts.

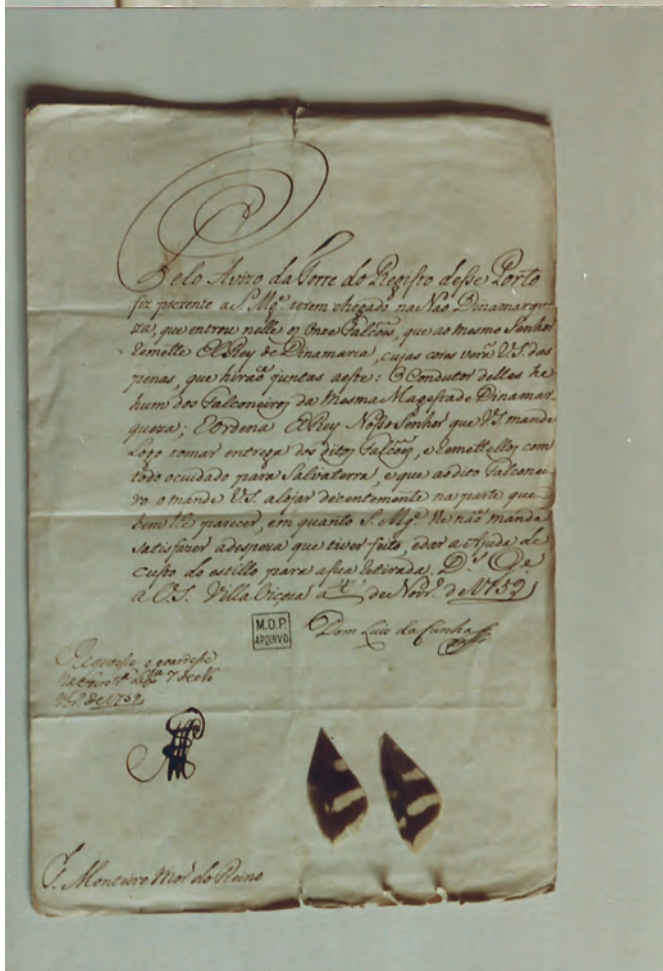
Despite the political troubles which caused, first, the Marquês de Pombal and, somewhat later, Sebastiao Jose de Carvalho e Melo to drop out of the governmental picture, falconry continued to blossom under the supervision of the Valkenswaarders. While falconry was discontinued elsewhere, in Lisbon the sport flourished. The presents of Danish falcons continued to arrive until 1806, only four years before hawking was ended at the Danish court itself.

With interruptions, the Portuguese sovereign received the following numbers of hunting falcons: 1752 (11), 1754 (20), 1755 (9), 1756 (7), 1757 (7), 1759 (11), 1760 (10), 1761 (22), 1764 (60), 1765 (40), 1766 (20), 1770 (16), 1771 (19), 1773 (20), 1775 (6), 1777 (12), 1779 (11), 1781 (6), 1783 (10), 1785 (4), 1787 (9), 1789 (9), 1791 (9), 1793 (15), 1797 (14), 1800 (18), 1806 (16).

In the 18th century, Dutch master falconers were employed at other noble falconry establishments in Europe: e.g. Matthijs Verburght (employed by Baron Von Wassenbergh, Stadtholder of Erfurt), Wouter Heesterbeek (Elector of Hannover), Jacob Goossens (Frederik Albrecht of Anhalt, Elector of Saxony) Jan Willem Beckers, Francis Daems and Johan van Ham (Elector of the Palatinate), Willem Goossens (Prince-Bishop of Liege), Wouter Goossens (Duke of Saxony, Meissen) Michiel Corstiaen Verhoeven (with the Duke of Parma) and Hendrik Bijnen (at Lord Orford's in England). Together with these, the falconers in Portugal enhanced the reputation of Valkenswaard and its falconers.

The falconers of Salvaterra de Magos of modern times





Internal message of the Royal Court of Portugal

As appears from the reports from Porto, I can announce to Your Majesty that a Danish ship has arrived, which has transported eleven falcons, which the King of Denmark has sent to you; the colours of which can be verified by Your Majesty with the feathers delivered separately to them. I also draw your attention to the following: the person accompanying the falcons is one of the falconers of the said King of Denmark.

The King recommends you to immediately take receipt of the said falcons and to send these to Salvaterra; furthermore, that you, - at your discretion, provide decent accommodation for the said falconer for as long as Your Majesty has not recompensed his expenses and, in addition, that you assist him with settling the expenses of his return journey.

Dom Luis da Cunha

*Master of Hunting of the Court
General Administration of Vila Viçosa,
on 4th November 1753.*

*This document is registered and kept at the
secretariat in Lisbon, 7th November 1759.*



Photo credit: Rob Palmer.

