

Appendix C – An Historical Background of Falconry *(with assistance from Kim Mauch, California Hawking Club)*

THE ORIGINS OF FALCONRY

Although its exact origins remain unknown, it is believed that falconry began in Mongolia, where it was commonly practiced over 3,000 years ago. It achieved a high level of refinement on the military campaigns of the Great Khans who practiced falconry for food and for sport between battles. By the time of Marco Polo there were over 60 officials managing over 5,000 trappers and more than 10,000 falconers and falconry workers. Falconry was later combined with legal and military affairs, diplomacy and land colonization and spread into new lands as a result.

FALCONRY IN ASIA

Falconry spread throughout Asia, reaching China by 700 B.C. and Korea by 220 B.C. It remained common in China until the early 1900's when the imperial family was overthrown. In 1989 the Chinese Wildlife Conservation Act was enacted, which prohibited hunting and trapping and was designed to protect rare species such as the panda and tiger. Falconry was then prohibited because the Act did not take into account falconry heritage and traditions of smaller isolated ethnic groups that still practiced falconry at the time.

Japan's isolation by the sea meant that the natural advance of falconry did not arrive until 355 A.D. when hawks were imported from Korea. Imperial falconers existed under the Imperial Household Ministry until the Second World War, after which time falconry became open to the public by a system of apprenticeships to retired imperial falconers who opened up "Schools of Falconry". There was also a folk tradition of subsistence hunting with mountain hawk eagles dating from the early 19th Century. It is believed that very few falconers currently practice this tradition.

FALCONRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Arabian Gulf region became famous for its falconers and falconry traditions. Through Arab influence it spread throughout the Islamic World, eastwards into central Asia, westward through North Africa and to Spain, resulting in the distinctive styles of falconry of the Bedouin, of Morocco and of Tunisia. The Koran itself includes a verse that permits falconry as a hunting method. Falconry continues to thrive in most areas of the Middle East and is considered a symbol of this region's civilization more than any other area in the world. It is estimated that 50% of the world's falconers live in the Middle East.

More recent archeological evidence suggests a possible 'parallel evolution', with the first hunting birds of prey trained at around the same time in both the Mongolian steppes and in Iran. With the overthrow of the Shah, the Department of the Environment prohibited breeding, buying and selling of any birds of prey as well as falconry. However, there is now a revival focused on preserving traditional methods.

FALCONRY IN INDO-PAKISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA

On the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, falconry was practiced since 600 B.C. In the Indus Valley, the sport was considered a life-sustaining instrument for desert dwellers, while those from the

green belts considered it a noble art, using the falcon as a symbol of high birth and luxury. Richard Burton, the famous 19th Century historian and translator, wrote extensively about falconry in this region in his book "*The Valley of the Indus*". In the Rajput states the royal families continued to practice falconry until the 1940's, when due to subsequent political conflicts the practice declined.

Pakistan is the foremost producer of falconry equipment in the world, even though the modern state of Pakistan has no native falconry. Pakistan's modern laws of the 1950's banned falconry to Pakistanis, but permitted hunting tourism for wealthy foreigners. A variety of problems stemmed from this commercialism, however, and regulations were enacted that included the licensing of bird trappers. The Environmental Agency of Abu Dhabi and Falcon Foundation International Pakistan joined hands to develop raptor conservation programs, including the annual release of falcons into the wild under the Falcon Release Program.

The falconers of Kazakhstan, ranked as the ninth largest country in the world and barely touched by modern civilization, continue the Central Asian tradition of flying golden eagles at hare for food, at fox for fur, and at wolves for protection of their flocks. Until modern times this was a subsistence necessity for the peoples of the Asian steppes, which also includes the peoples of Kirghizstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia and the ethnic minorities in western China. In neighboring Turkmenistan the falconry tradition differs greatly and is more like the traditional falconry of Iran and Afghanistan, using saker falcons and tazy (the Turkmen version of the saluki) to pursue desert hare.

FALCONRY IN EUROPE

The earliest evidence of falconry in Europe is from the 5th century A.D. Using the term 'European' falconry is misleading, because falconry techniques and technologies have been traded between European and other countries for centuries. Falconry entered Spain in the 5th century A.D., coming from North Africa with the Moors and along the northern Mediterranean coast from eastern Europe with the Goths at approximately the same time.

During its 'Golden Age', falconry was a means of cultural communication and its geographical reach was extraordinary. Due to the widespread popularity of falconry at the time, falcons made ideal diplomatic gifts, and 17th Century falcon traders brought falcons to various royal courts from Flanders, Germany, Russia, Switzerland, Norway, Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, the Balearic Islands, Spain, Turkey, Alexandria, the Barbary States, and India. The use of falcons as diplomatic gifts faded, and falconry's connection with the aristocracy made it less popular after the French Revolution, eventually giving way to the new and highly effective sport of shooting. By the 19th Century, very few individuals still practiced the sport in Europe. The falconry clubs that remained became essential in maintaining both the knowledge of falconry itself and its traditions.

Spain and Portugal

Until the 16th Century Iberian falconry was synonymous with Arab falconry and written references abound in the Arabic language. Elsewhere in Europe many falconry terms have their origins in medieval French. After a gap of two centuries, Dr. Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente revived Spanish falconry from scratch in the 1950's, not having the benefit of a practicing falconer. His sources were Spanish medieval falconry literature and foreign falconers. In the

1980's falconry started to flourish in Spain and Portugal, and currently Spain is numbered in the top five falconry nations.

Italy

Falconry reached Italy from three different routes - from Arab falconers through the Norman Court in Sicily, from the north through German influence, and through Venetian contacts with falconers in Asia and the Orient. Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, who had his court in Sicily, was a passionate and avid practitioner of the sport and is considered the 'father' of both falconry and modern scientific investigative study. His masterwork on falconry, "*De Arte Venandi Cum Avibus*", is still in print and distills the falconry knowledge of many cultures. His castle, the Castello di Melfi, continues to host an annual falconry field meeting.

By the 1900's falconry in Italy had almost died out. Due to competition for land with shooting interests, classical game hawking is difficult to practice. There are 31 official falconry clubs affiliated to one of the three large falconry federations or unions. As in other countries, falconers have pioneered conservation reintroduction programs for peregrines and eagle owls.

Germany

The period from 500 to 1600 saw the zenith of falconry in Germany. By 1890, however, only the hawking establishment of Baron C. von Biederman remained. A small number of falconers practiced the sport in near-isolation until a revival began in 1923, and the establishment of the Deutscher Falkenorden (DFO). Today the DFO is a thriving organization with over 1,000 members and is the oldest falconry club in the world still in existence.

German falconers must pass both hunting and falconry examinations. They must also have permission to hawk in a hunting district, often difficult and expensive to obtain. Only three of the 15 native German raptors are permitted in falconry - the golden eagle, peregrine falcon and goshawk. The most commonly flown raptors in Germany are European goshawks (about 60%) and peregrine falcons (about 15%), while golden eagles and other raptors used for falconry make up the remainder.

The peregrine breed-and-release program founded by Professor Christian Saar and the DFO, following the example of the Peregrine Fund, has proved so successful that he has been honored for his work by the German government.

France

In France, falconry reached the height of complexity and scale under Louis XIII during the 16th Century. His falconry consisted of 300 birds, subdivided into six specialized categories or equipages for hunting particular types of prey. After the French Revolution, however, the sport of falconry was omitted from the law books. A revival came after the Second World War, when in 1945 the Association Nationale des Fauconniers et Autoursiers Francais (ANFA) was formed. Today, ANFA has around 300 members who fly a wide variety of hawks and falcons, and were instrumental in obtaining full legal protection for French birds of prey.

The Netherlands and Belgium

The heyday of falconry in the Netherlands and Belgium was the first half of the 19th Century when collectively they were the center for falcon trading and trapping (Valkenswaard) and, were the homeland of Europe's finest professional falconers. Belgian Arendonk's falconers were renowned from the 12th Century, with some families providing falconers for five centuries. In 1839 the Loo Club was founded and revived the practice of flying at great heights at passage herons, not seen since the 1600's. It enjoyed patronage from the royal House of Orange and had members from all over Europe.

Only three falconers were left in Belgium at the end of the Second World War. By 1966 their numbers had grown sufficiently to form their own national organization, the Club Marie de Bourgogne, named after the queen who died from a fall while hawking in 1482. Falconers' political lobbying efforts resulted in a limited number of licenses being granted in order to keep the cultural heritage of falconry alive. Falconry achieved legal status in Belgium in 1985 and currently there are approximately 200 active falconers. Current regulations in The Netherlands limit the total number of falconers to 200, and the only raptors allowed for falconry are the goshawk and peregrine falcon.

Denmark, Norway and Iceland

Remains of hawks are found in the graves of important Vikings and manuscripts from the 6th Century detail that the sport of falconry was widespread. Falconry continued to be important until the 18th Century, signified by the demise of the royal mews in 1810. Both Iceland (Danish territory) and Norway were well known for gifts of goshawks and gyrfalcons to foreign sovereigns. In modern times a few people kept falconry alive in Denmark after the cessation of royal patronage, but so few that a Hunting Act in 1967 effectively prohibited it. The Danish Hawking Club is working hard to reverse this ban.

The British Isles

Falconry has been known in the British Isles since the 6th Century and possibly longer. All the kings from the Normans to the Stuarts kept hawking establishments, and there was a landed gentry class who also practiced falconry. When subsequent revolts against the aristocracy resulted in the nobility losing their lands, falconry in England and Scotland still remained a popular pastime. Falconers kept the knowledge and the traditions of falconry alive long after its decline in the 17th and 18th Centuries.

In Ireland falconry was already familiar by late Celtic times (7th Century). Written references relate more to the monetary value of hawks than to descriptions of the sport, pointing at an export trade rather than a native use. References in the Brehon Laws denote that Ireland supplied the nobility of western Europe with peregrines and goshawks until the end of the 19th century. The Irish Hawking Club was formed in 1870, and was the impetus for the earliest legislation protecting raptors in Ireland.

Falconry in Great Britain was given formal legal status by the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981, and allows anyone to practice falconry without a special permit. It also allows any person to legally possess a raptor without meeting any specific legal requirements, competency testing, or any intention of actual hunting. As falconry is defined as the *pursuit* or *hunting* of quarry with a trained raptor, the Act allowed possession of a raptor, which in itself does not meet the definition of falconry. Only captive bred raptors are allowed. Although the taking of wild raptors for falconry is permitted under government license, it has not been allowed in recent decades.

Central and Eastern Europe

During the heyday of falconry in Europe, whole villages throughout Central and Eastern Europe specialized in the trapping, training and trading of falcons and falconry-related handicraft. Hungary has been famous from medieval times to the present day for artistically decorated falconry equipment. Saker falcons from Transylvania were delivered regularly to Turkish Sultans during the 16th Century while under Turkish occupation. This tax, paid annually in return for peace, was called "Falco Nagium". Falconry continued to flourish until the 17th century when it began to wane and was replaced by the sport of shooting. Falconry held on with one or two dedicated individuals until 1967 when approximately seventy falconers founded the Czech Falconers' Club, the largest and most influential of the central European clubs.

Russia and Surrounding Areas

Falconry arrived in Russia with the Huns and Khazars in the 8th and 9th Centuries and flourished in the Middle Ages, especially in the Moscow Principality. One of the Moscow districts is even now known as "Sokolniki", which translates "Falconers" or "Site of Falconers". Russian falconry had its heyday during the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich Romanov (1626-1676), but the sport had practically died out among Russian elite by the end of the 19th Century. Although not officially prohibited by the Communist regime that followed, falconry was not supported. Since 2003 Russian and Ukrainian falconers have been holding field meets.

In Georgia and Transcaucasia falconry is well documented since the 5th Century. The region is still famous for the flying of passage sparrowhawks at quail, a tradition popularized in Ottoman times and still popular in Turkey and Tunisia. Georgia was the first of the former Soviet states to formally legalize falconry in 1967. A monument in the town of Poti is devoted to bazieri (sparrowhawkers), and there are over 500 registered bazieri at the present time.

FALCONRY IN AFRICA

Falconry's most recent expansion has been to South Africa where it went with colonists. However, current excavations in Zimbabwe suggest falconry may have been present much earlier and may have come from and been influenced by pre-Islamic Arabia, India, China and Persia.

In modern times, falconry was imported to Southern Africa, Zimbabwe and other areas by a diverse group of individuals who came from a variety of origins. Of the 59 diurnal raptors, 31 species have been flown for falconry with variable success. The South African Falconry Association was formed in 1990 and has been instrumental in South African raptor conservation, including an African peregrine breeding program. Clubs in Zimbabwe and other areas have been formed.

FALCONRY IN NORTH AMERICA

In the United States, interest in falconry began to rise around the turn of the 20th century and slowly gained popularity, aided by two illustrated articles in the National Geographic magazine for December 1920 entitled "*Falconry, the Sport of Kings*" and "*American Birds of Prey - A Review of Their Value*" by famed artist Louis Agassiz Fuertes. The glorification of the peregrine was also prevalent in the available literature of the period and produced widespread appeal. It

follows that, without the long hawking tradition that existed elsewhere in the world, falconry in the United States found an attraction among those individuals interested in nature and natural history, rather than the hunting fraternity. However, while it inspired many would-be falconers, the 'falconry' of that era consisted mostly of possession rather than active hunting. This was due to the fact that neither the terrain nor the quarry was readily available in the eastern U.S. that was suited to active hunting with peregrines.

Up to this point, the use of eyass raptors was predominant. But the discovery of peregrine falcons migrating along the barrier islands of the eastern U.S. in the late 1920's caused a significant shift away from the traditional use of eyass falcons to many American falconers trapping their own birds, including migrants of other suitable species. In contrast, passage birds used in Europe were obtained primarily from professional trappers. This was a circumstance that differentiated North American falconers from their European counterparts and continues to this day.

In the 1930's and early 1940's, a series of articles by John and Frank Craighead on their travels to India and the falconry they encountered fueled increasing interest in the sport. Still, by the beginning of the Second World War, there were less than 200 known falconers in North America. Nonetheless, local falconry clubs began to appear, a few expanding to the national level. Colonel R. Luff Meredith, a retired military officer, developed a passion for falconry early in the 20th Century and was directly involved in the formation of several of North America's earliest national falconry organizations. Today, he is considered the "Father of American Falconry".

By 1961, the number of American falconers had considerably increased, and the North American Falconers Association (NAFA) was formed with the purpose of promoting raptor conservation and promoting falconry-associated legalization and regulation. In most states and provinces in North America the majority of raptors were unprotected and in some instances bounties were offered for their killing. Federal involvement with raptors was virtually nonexistent outside of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940, and few states regulated falconry. Due to interest in natural history, many falconers became professionally involved in wildlife resource management and therefore were motivated to work toward a scientific appreciation involving the conservation of raptorial birds.

Falconers and scientists became aware of marked declines in peregrine falcons in the 1960's. In 1965 the first scientific conference was held to investigate possible causes to this decline. The Peregrine Fund was established and research commenced to try and find the cause. Many of the experts and research leads who participated in these actions were falconers. Falconers' birds were used to initiate a captive bred population for release into the wild. Due in large part to the efforts of concerned falconers, the American peregrine falcon has recovered and was removed as a listed species (both state and federal).

During the 1970's falconers contributed to the issuance of revised federal falconry regulations. Through this process, NAFA maintained a close working relationship with state and federal resource management agencies to aid in uniform falconry legislation. To this end, national-level falconry regulations were adopted in 1976. The Environmental Assessment that was produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to examine the potential impact of the new 1976 falconry regulations concluded that falconry posed no significant threats to either quarry species or to the raptors themselves. Due to its integral role in the development and issuance of these regulations, NAFA assumed the role of formally representing the sport of falconry to federal and state resource agencies. By 1998 falconry was legal in all states but Hawaii and the District of

Columbia. Subsequent regulatory goals achieved by NAFA included federal regulations covering captive propagation of raptors, and the exemption of said raptors from provisions of the Federal Endangered Species Act.

In the mid-1980's FWS commenced an extensive revision of falconry regulations. This was in large part due to a sense that falconers were not abiding by state and federal regulations. "Operation Falcon" was led by the Law Enforcement Division of the FWS to investigate whether some falconers were trading endangered raptors, including the peregrine falcon, between North America and the Middle East. The investigation proved fruitless and the falconry community was exonerated of any wrong doing in this matter. Subsequently FWS offered full support for the practice of falconry in North America. Due to the concerns generated from "Operation Falcon", the 1980 proposed revisions appeared onerous to the falconry community. The Environmental Assessment produced for these revisions stated that the practice of falconry had little or no impact on raptor populations. Falconers, along with the support of the states, headed off the more onerous portions of the proposed federal regulations and succeeded in streamlining many of the state regulations as well.

In October 2008, revised federal falconry regulations were published in the Federal Registrar. Some noted changes include limited take of eyass, take allowance of passage peregrine falcons, elimination of federal permits by January 1, 2014, establishment of electronic reporting for acquisition, loss, and transfer of raptors, and allowing experienced falconers to assist rehabilitation facilities to condition raptors for release into the wild. The Final Environmental Assessment for these new regulations stated that falconry has no detectable effect of raptor populations.

Mexico and Canada

In Mexico, a revival of falconry began in the 1970's and the ensuing decades have seen a steady expansion of its practice. A number of local clubs are now established, and efforts are underway towards improved raptor conservation measures and falconry regulation.

Falconry in Canada is now legal in the majority of provinces, but there is considerable variation in provisions because of the lack of Federal oversight. There are many falconry organizations representing the interests of falconers throughout Canada.

Adapted from:

International Association for Falconry and Conservation for Birds. "A History of Falconry"
<<http://www.iaf.org/>>

Carnie, Kent. North American Falconers Association. "A Brief History of Falconry in North America" < <http://www.n-a-f-a.com/>>