

What is Falconry?

Falconry is the taking of quarry in its natural state and habitat by means of a trained bird of prey

Human development has drastically reduced the amount of natural area available for wildlife. Very few reserves are large enough to hold viable raptor populations; most raptors, and other wildlife, must therefore share habitat with humans.

To preserve diverse wild systems in these areas requires knowledge, skills and resources for management. Falconers contribute very widely to knowledge of wild raptor ecology, management and veterinary science, and modern falconers continue a tradition of research that extends back over 800 years to Frederick II of Hohenstauffen.

Falconers are active conservationists worldwide and have founded internationally active conservation organisations specifically to distribute the knowledge and skills they developed. This knowledge is also passed onto

The History of an Art

Falconry appeared with the emergence of civilizations. In documented Iranian history the first to hunt with birds of prey was Tahmooreth, a king of the Pishdadid dynasty, who lived around 8000 BCE (Before Common Era). This could mean falconry has a history of more than 8,000 - 10,000 years. Early records also describe a highly technical form of falconry that must have taken hundreds or possibly thousands of years to develop.

Both the Mongolian steppes and Iran/Persia are credited as being falconry's birthplace. One theory is that falconry may have developed independently in both of these locations at roughly the same time.

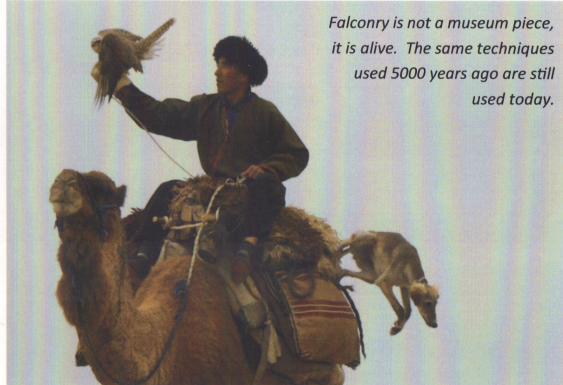
Falconry quickly spread outwards from Asia into China, the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf where it became an integral part of the local culture and subsequently extended across the Islamic world. Falconry entered Europe due to contact with the Islamic world possibly as early as the 3rd century BCE in Spain, but by the 7th and 8th centuries CE (Common Era) was thriving as far away as Ireland and Scotland and became the sport of kings during the Medieval period. Diplomatic gifting of falcons between the Christian and Islamic world helped create diplomatic ties which eventually ended the crusades.

Finally, as Europeans spread to the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa they took falconry with them.



The oldest known depiction of falconry. A petroglyph from Isfahan, Iran, estimated to be over 5000 years old.

A modern falconer in Turkmenistan.



Falconry is not a museum piece, it is alive. The same techniques used 5000 years ago are still used today.

"Falconry isn't something subject to emulation or expediency. It is rather a passion endowed by the divine agency"



Falconry's Cultural Heritage

Falconry requires a complex range of skills and knowledge that cannot just be learned from books or the internet, but must be passed on by a teacher and through practical experience. Falconers learn from others.

This chain of masters and apprentices stretches backwards through time. Falconers today are part of an ancient tradition that is passed from parent to child and falconer to falconer, and is an integral part of many cultures around the world. These children will grow up to become part of the next generation, one link in a chain of thousands.



In a modern, fast-paced world, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) seeks to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of humanity, and particularly those arts and activities that are best passed on from one generation to the next through direct demonstration – showing by example – as opposed to learning through other mediums.

This means that falconry is recognised as giving communities and individuals a sense of identity that is transmitted from generation to generation and is recreated by communities in response to their environment and their interaction with nature, providing them with a sense of identity and continuity.

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From ancient Persia and the steppes of Asia, falconry has spread around the globe. Falconers are part of an international family who share values, traditions and practices. The country may change and the landscape may vary, but the spirit of a falconer, our passion for birds of prey and our dedication to raptor conservation remains the same.

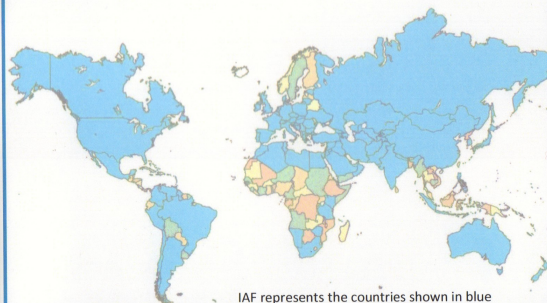


International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey is an International NGO, representing 110 falconry and raptor organisations in 80 countries, working to ensure the protection of falconry and of birds of prey around the world.

For more information go to www.iaf.org

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IAF represents the countries shown in blue