



What are the American Falconry Conservancy and the sport of falconry?

The US Fish and Wildlife Service defines falconry as the art of training and using a raptor to hunt quarry for sport. While its origins are unknown, the history of the sport and art appears to go back thousands of years. The first evidence of falconry begins in the East, and then spread through many civilizations. In the Middle Ages, it became extremely popular in England during that period. Laws were framed for the protection of the falcons and hawks, and to safeguard their owner's interests.

Falconry has always gone hand in hand with conservation. To pursue the art of falconry, the hawks and falcons required must exist in number enough to assure their existence and not risk the species' decline. In addition, plentiful game numbers are crucial for the falconer to have enough quarry to pursue.

Interest in falconry in North America began to increase after National Geographic published an article in 1920 about the sport by an artist named Louis Agassiz Fuertes, which was accompanied by his magnificent illustrations. Beginning in the 1940s, peregrine falcon populations, particularly on the eastern seaboard, were beginning to show a decline. While many attribute this solely to the widespread use of the insecticide DDT, it is more likely a combination of habitat loss; the slaughter of them by game managers, hunters, and pigeon fanciers; egg collectors decimating nesting sites; and the extinction of the passenger pigeon, their primary food source, that contributed to the species' extreme decline.

Falconers who were concerned about this decline in population numbers discovered how to breed peregrine falcons in captivity. They formed the Peregrine Fund, and using the falconer's techniques and passion as well as their money and the help of falconer-scientists and their raptors, the breeding of falcons was first accomplished. Eventually, due to the findings of that successful experiment, several other affected species besides the peregrine were saved from potential extinction.

During that time, falconers and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) cooperated on bringing regulations based on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) to protect both the raptors and the sport of falconry. Today, falconry is the most over-regulated hunting activity in the country. The American Falconry Conservancy exists in large part to protect and preserve the art and practice of falconry for future generations and to protect falconers' rights, which are the



broadest liberties possible that are not in conflict with legitimate conservation efforts based upon sound biological and legal reasoning. Our belief is that citizens have a right to practice falconry within the confines of ecologically and ethically responsible behavior, and AFC defends this right.

For more information about falconry visit this link to our article "Introduction to the Culture of Falconry". <https://falconryconservancy.org/document/#p=1>

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