

THE ROLE OF FALCONERS IN CURRENT
CONSERVATION PROJECTS:

The North American Context

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Ontario
Hawking Club

INTRODUCTION

- BES University of Waterloo, Environment & Resource Studies and Anthropology
- Worked with raptors since 1996 – Rehabilitation, education, wild falcon releases, falconry
- Falconer since 2003
- Director, Ontario Hawking Club 2004 - 2011
- Conservation & Outreach Liaison, OHC, 2014 - Present
- Provincial Representative on NAFA Intangible Cultural Heritage of Falconry Committee



OVERVIEW

- Context for falconers as conservationists
- Beginnings of falconry and conservation in North America
- Current local projects
- NAFA



Falconers and Conservation

“No one will protect what they don’t care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced”

- David Attenborough



FALCONERS SHARE...

AN INTIMATE BOND



A PARTNERSHIP

BECOME
IMMERSED
IN THEIR
WORLD



DO WHAT THEY DO

SHARE IN THEIR
EVERYDAY LIVES



A FRONT ROW SEAT

TO NATURE'S MOST DRAMATIC MOMENTS



BEARING WITNESS

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE...



...ALMOST MAGIC

UNPARALLELED PARTICIPATION IN THE NATURAL WORLD



A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

A PRIVILEGE THAT WE CHERISH



AN ANCIENT ART IN THE MODERN WORLD



FOR FALCONERS, 'CARING'
IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT

FALCONRY IN NORTH AMERICA

- Falconry is legal across the US and Canada
- 4300 falconers in U.S.
- ~400 in Canada
- ~150 in Ontario
- Thus a small but dedicated conservation community



FALCONRY AND CONSERVATION IN
NORTH AMERICA

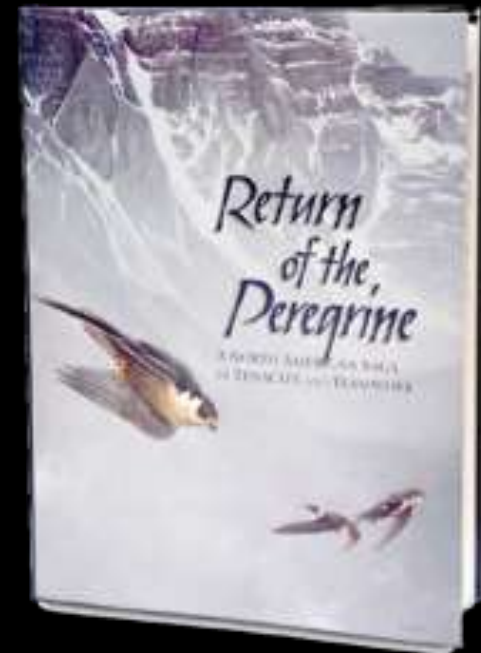
“The dispassionate
brown eyes of the
Peregrine, more than
those of any other bird,
have been witness to
our struggle for
civilization.”

- Roger Tory Peterson



PEREGRINE FALCON RESTORATION

- One of largest and one of the most successful species recovery programs
- Influenced environmental trends of the 1970s and 1980s
- Contributed to development of conservation biology
- Techniques are now being applied to other species
 - e.g. California Condor



Recovery Efforts by Falconers

Peregrine Fund established in United States by falconers in 1970 as a response to decline in peregrine falcons



Jim Enderson, Tom Cade, Bob Berry, Frank Bond, Kent Carnie, Jim Weaver, Bill Burnham

Richard Fyfe in Canada

- Credited with saving the peregrine falcon in Canada
- Established captive breeding facility in Wainright, Alberta
- Original founder of the Saskatchewan Falconry Association



Pioneers in Captive Breeding

- Land for P-fund purchased and donated by NAFA
- “Hands on” experience critical in pioneering captive breeding and release techniques
- Falconers donated personal birds to breeding efforts



Peregrine Falcon Recovery

An international endangered species success story



Peregrine Fund East, Tom Cade

Peregrine Fund West, Bill Burnham

Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, Brian Walton

Midwest Release Program, Pat Redig, Bud Tordoff

Canadian Release Program, Richard Fyfe

Saskatchewan Cooperative Falcon Project, Lynn Oliphant

All of these programs were started and run by falconers



CONSERVATION INSPIRED

- **Peregrine Fund** is the largest raptor conservation organization in the world
- Falconers were key founding members of the **Raptor Research Foundation**
- **North American Grouse Partnership** founded by falconers in response to declining prairie grouse
- Saving the peregrine enshrined a conservation ethic in North American falconry that continues



**CURRENT CONSERVATION
EFFORTS BY LOCAL FALCONRY
COMMUNITIES**

ONTARIO HAWKING CLUB

- Founded in 1984 with 15 members to:
 - Promote high quality falconry
 - Promote the conservation of birds of prey
 - Secure a legal framework that would allow falconry to flourish
- Approximately 100 members
- Affiliated with NAFA and OFAH



OHC CONSERVATION

- Produced peregrines and conducted releases
- Assisted in woodland raptor studies with MNR and CWS
- Created Conservation & Outreach Liaison position in 2016 to help focus conservation efforts
- Currently engaged in “Project Goshawk” and Kestrel Nest Box program



OHC PROJECT GOSHAWK

- Very little known about goshawks in eastern NA
- Project aims to fill the void
 - Record nest locations over the long term
 - Build a solid base of data to facilitate additional research
 - Build support for inclusion of wild goshawks in Ontario falconry



EFFORTS TO DATE

- Organized early spring search “blitzes” since 2012
- Targeted searches in additional areas
- Known previous site checks
- Located 50 active sites since 2012



PROJECT GOSHAWK EARLY RESULTS

- ~80 sites identified 1980-2000
- 19 sites in 2012
- 29 sites in 2013
- 21 sites in 2014
- 20 sites in 2015
- 10 sites in 2016
 - Reduced search effort
- 48 distinct sites since 2012



CURRENT STATUS



- Enter data in Ontario Nest Record Scheme or National Heritage Information Centre
 - No organization has a current, active dataset on goshawks as large or relevant
- Additional data collection
 - Effort, absence, etc
- Partnership with SERS, University of Waterloo
 - Provide guidance/focus
 - Make use of the data
- Other Partners
 - Conservation Authorities
 - County Foresters
 - OFAH and other supportive organizations

OHC Kestrel Nest Box program

- Affiliated with American Kestrel Partnership
- A Peregrine Fund Project
- In response to declining Kestrel numbers
 - WNV
 - Increase in Cooper's Hawks
 - Loss of habitat
- Commenced 2016



Chris Dulong, Project Coordinator

GOALS

- Provide nesting opportunities while collecting data to inform conservation strategy
- Encourage OHC members to become involved in local conservation initiative
- Provide opportunities for apprentices and members newer to falconry opportunity to learn about raptors in natural environment



CURRENT STATUS

- 2016 installed 12 nest boxes
- 2017 added additional boxes totaling 22
- 2018 hoping to reach 50-75 boxes
- Dedicated nest box building at OHC summer meeting



Citizen Science

- Maximum 2 nest boxes per person
- Must register with American Kestrel Partnership
- Hang boxes in appropriate location and share coordinates
- Monitor boxes and share information





Andrew Wernaart and Chris Dulong, OHC BBQ, 2017

Saskatchewan: The Wild West of Falconry



Saskatchewan Falconry Association

- Oldest falconry club in North America
- Founded 1958 by Richard Fyfe and others
- Lynn Oliphant and Paddy Thompson headed Saskatchewan Cooperative Falcon Project
- Members continue to be active in range of raptor conservation initiatives



Digging in the Dirt

- Scarcity of prairie falcons inspired SFA members to increase suitable nesting locations
- Prairie falcon nest hole digging started in late 1960's by Richard Fyfe, and continues
- Data from banding records confirms over 1200 prairie falcons have fledged from SFA-dug nest holes



Bob Rafuse digging nest hole

Quebec Falconers

- Establishing diurnal raptor banding station
- Document migration in St. Lawrence corridor
- Partner with Dr. David Bird, McGill University (formerly Raptor Research Foundation)





North American Falconers Association

- Established 1961 with currently over 2000 members; includes State & Provincial member clubs
- Annual regional field meets provide networking and sharing opportunities
- Conservation Committee focuses on raptors and prey base and can operate on landscape scale
- NAFA important for coordination and dissemination of information



Martin Geleyse, Canadian Director, NAFA

NAFA and ICH

- Falconry designated an “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” in 2010 by UNESCO
- 11 nominating countries – largest in UNESCO history



- Canada and United States did not ratify

NAFA's Response

- Created ICH of Falconry Committee
- State and Provincial representatives tasked with documenting heritage of falconry
- Role of falconers and conservation of great importance
- Hope to encourage governments to ratify

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE
Protecting Falconry's ICH

Vision

A North America where the cultural heritage of falconry is recognized and the practice of falconry protected.

Mission

By recognizing falconry's Intangible Cultural Heritage we will safeguard falconry's past and protect falconry's future

Goals

- To enhance visibility and awareness of falconry's Intangible Cultural Heritage and its importance
- To celebrate falconry as a social tradition respecting nature and the environment which provides its community members with a sense of belonging, continuity and identity
- To identify how traditions are passed on from generation to generation and which skills and traditions are being lost
- To document the global nature of falconry in the history of mankind
- To ensure our efforts to safeguard falconry and its transmission such as apprenticeship, handicrafts and conservation are supported by planned measures to strengthen falconry's visibility and raise awareness at the national and international level

Zoom

1 of 3

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Falconry is a beautiful, unique way to experience the natural world that is totally dependant on healthy natural ecosystems
- Raptor conservation is part of ethos in North American Falconry
- Contributions to conservation continue to reach far and wide beyond the scope of falconry
- A centralized web-network possibly via NAFA for North America might be of use



QUESTIONS?



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