

Christian de Coune (1941-2011)

Falconer and Naturalist

Reminiscences of friends and colleagues



The Falconry Heritage Trust

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Preface

It is an honour to be asked to write a preface to any book, and a greater honour to be asked to write one in a book about one of one's heroes. Christian de Coune was definitely one of my heroes, as he was to so many of the contributors to this book, not least to the author of this anthology. I first met Jevgeni and Christian at the same IAF meeting in Amarillo. Jevgeni will agree with me when I say that, since then, we both learned a great deal from Christian and we both have benefitted from the encouragement and the charm and personality of a remarkable gentleman.

Yes, it is an honour to be asked to write a preface, but it is a particularly hard thing to do; all the chapters of the book sing the praises of a great man, so what can I say in a preface that is not already said by someone better in the pages that come afterwards? I know you will enjoy reading it, dipping into it a chapter at a time, savouring snippets and anecdotes and seeing the admiration that iconic figures in modern falconry have for such an icon.

I admired Christian every bit as much as all of the contributors to this book: I also admire Jevgeni for all his work in compiling it and his patience in collecting the tributes. We worked together towards the glorious moment when falconry would be added to the UNESCO list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. One of the earliest thoughts we had from researching for it was that history must be written down, because before writing started there was probably no history, or more likely, an awful lot of history will never be known simply because no-one wrote it down.

To Jevgeni, researcher and archivist, I say thank you for making us write it down. The history of our friend, Christian de Coune is recorded.

Gary Timbrell, CEO to the IAF (International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey)

Introduction

In 2018, the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) celebrated its half-century anniversary. During that time, the organisation had been chaired by ten presidents. The longest tenure of all of these was held by a Belgian national, Christian de Coune (1941-2011). Charismatic and well suited to his position, erudition and a memorable appearance were his integral hallmarks. Unfortunately, an insidious illness tore him from our ranks more than ten years ago. It is often said that great things are seen from a distance. Christian's contribution has remained little known to many falconers around the world. Therefore, we wanted to collect information about this amazing man from people around the world who had the honour to know him, work with him or be friends with him. I reached out to the world community of falconers in November 2021, after which it took almost half a year to collect the material. During these months I managed to collect interesting information which tells not only of his work as President, but also reveals different sides of his character.

I am very grateful to all co-authors of this book and authors of photographs, who responded, spared their time and found an opportunity to remember Christian de Coune with a kind word. It was my pleasure to translate from Russian into English the materials provided by falconers from the former Soviet Union. Special thanks and appreciation to David Horobin for his literary editing of the text of the entire book. Patrick Morel, Kathleen Donck, Alexandre Vintchevski and Dr Igor Tavcar kindly helped with some additional contacts.

Special thanks to the Board of Directors of the Falconry Heritage Trust who from the very beginning supported the idea and agreed to fund this non-commercial project namely: Dr Nick Fox (Chairman), Paul Beecroft, Dick ten Bosch, Huisheng Chen, Patrizia Cimberio, David Horobin, Scott McNeff, Mark Upton, Kris Ulens and the FHT's accountant Andrew Thomas.

Many thanks to all people who sent in photos, documents or other illustrations for this book: Patrick Morel, Alexandre Vintchevski, Kathleen Donck, Dr Keiya Nakajima, Darius Daugela, Veronique Blontrock, Frigyes Bogyai, Jacques van Gerven, Frits Kleyn, Tomáš Krivjanský, Dr Alexander Sorokin, János Tóth, Roman Savich, Anthony Crosswell, Dr Igor Tavcar, Pavel Yakimov, Frank Bond, Ladislav Melo, Yukio Asaoka, Peter Devers, Debbie Stewart, János Bagyura, Mark Williams, Kris Ulens, Gary Timbrell, Janusz Sielicki, Vitaliy Vetrov, Tula Stapert, Dr Alexander Abuladze, Adolfo Ruiz, Dr Bohumil Straka and Petr Zvolanek.

This book is a warm tribute to the volunteer, the lawyer and the tireless fighter Christian de Coune for all that he did globally for the survival and development of falconry.

If any reader has any additional information on Christian we will be glad to receive it at: fht@falcons.co.uk

Jevgeni Shergalin, Compiler, Editor and Translator, Falconry Heritage Trust Archivist, Carmarthen, Wales, UK

Part 1

Christian de Coune (1941-2011) – the great ambassador of falconry

Obituary published by CIC and kindly provided by Patrick Morel.

Christian de Coune, the great ambassador of falconry, passed away leaving a legacy of tolerance, friendship and those “small words” which mean that falconers still fly their hawks today. He is survived by his partner Kathou, who he met in his twilight years.

It all began back in the 1960s when, faced with increasing threats to falconry, Belgian falconers came together to form the *Club Marie de Bourgogne*. In 1971, Christian was elected President of *Club Marie de Bourgogne*, a position he held for 30 years. Not a practitioner himself, except for a few years, he devoted his life to falconry’s survival. He worked tirelessly in promoting falconry and ensuring that it was adequately legally recognised; firstly in Belgium but then, with the advent of the Birds Directive in the late 1970s, his work became more international.

Christian paid several visits to the UK in the seventies, enjoying grouse hawking with the Franco-Belgian equipage of Gilles Nortier and Patrick Morel and visiting the famous international grouse hawkers led by the 'locals': Geoffrey Pollard, Steven Frank and Roger Upton, and incorporating the Italians Umberto Caproni, Fulco Tosti and Frikki Pratesi; the Germans Christian Saar and Eckart Schormair, and the Dutch/French team of Frits Kleyn and Charles de Ganay.

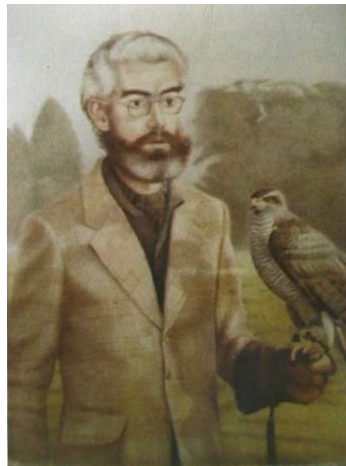
Together with Anthony Jack, then President of the BFC, Christian helped ensure that the Birds Directive made special reference to allow for falconry, a coup long admired and envied by other hunters and one of the first international recognitions of our sport.

He also worked at other important international meetings and conventions, always ensuring that the small words, the fine details, of the texts continued to allow for falconry.

In 1984, Christian was elected President of the IAF, a position he held for 14 years and in which he was supported by his life-long friend Patrick Morel who served as Secretary under Christian in *both Club Marie de Bourgogne* and the IAF, later becoming President himself.

Christian travelled all over the world visiting over 100 countries collecting dictionaries so that he could always employ a few words of the local language, which helped to make him the great ambassador for falconry that he was.

Christian was driven by a fascination of nature and was a true natural historian, which gave him immense credibility when defending the case of falconers and falconry. Well known and held in high regard by those that knew him, his passing is an enormous loss to falconers and hunters worldwide.



Portrait of Christian de Coune – unknown artist.



Christian with goshawk (tiercel) in 1963 at his home Le Cochetay, a small manor in Gomzé-Andoumont, near Liege. (From Patrick Morel's archive).



Christian with goshawk in 1965 at Le Cochetay, his small manor in Gomzé-Andoumont, near Liege. (Patrick Morel).



Christian de Coune with cadge in Scotland, 1980. (Patrick Morel).



Christian de Coune with cadge in Scotland, 1980. (Patrick Morel).



Christian with a falcon and dog, Oroshaza, Hungary. Patrick Morel is in front, with Róbert Kiss at left and, on the right, (seen partly) Dr István Lakos. (Patrick Morel).

My dear friend and love

Brief biography

Christian was born on 26th May 1941 during the Second World War, the son of Lucien de Coune (squire) and Claire de Hepcée. His sister Clotilde was then four years old and the family lived at Cochetay, the family manor built by his paternal great-grandfather in the early 20th century. It is located in Gomzé-Andoumont, about fifteen kilometres south of Liège, the village where his grandparents moved.

Christian's father, Lucien (born on 27th December 1904), died in 1987 at the age of 83 after suffering a heart attack while mowing his lawn on his tractor. He had spent his entire career with *Sabena*, the Belgian national airline, spoke several languages and welcomed foreign visitors.



Christian's father - Lucien de Coune (1907-1987) by Marie-Thérèse Heyvaert. Oil on canvas. (90x70). 1976. (Courtesy of Kathleen Donck).

Christian's mother, Claire (born 21st August 1912), died in 1974 at the age of 62. Aside from her sister, Claire had two brothers, both of whom were resistance fighters during the Second World War, serving in the air force as pilots. Their fate was tragic. In 1944, the eldest, Charles, was shot near Toulouse (France) by soldiers of the SS Das Reich division. He was 33 years old and had received several honours, including the Order of Leopold (1939) and the Croix de Guerre (London) (1943). The youngest brother, Michel, had been shot down in flight a year earlier, in 1943, aged just 27.



Claire de Hépécée, Christian's mother – Oil on canvas (70x55) by Marie-Thérèse Heyvaert. 1936. (Courtesy of Kathleen Donck).

During his youth, Christian lived in Brussels with his parents and sister in a large house that they shared with his maternal grandmother, an uncle and an aunt and his cousins. It is situated opposite the *Collège St-Michel*. At a very young age, Christian went to boarding

school in Antwerp to learn Flemish, then later attended secondary school at the *Collège St-Michel*, run by the Jesuits.

Christian received an eclectic education. He learned English not in England or the United States, like most young people, but in India, during a stay with one of his uncles, Dom Luc, who was a Jesuit in Darjeeling.

When his parents returned to live at Cochetay, Christian continued his studies in Liege at the HEC (*Hautes Etudes Commerciales*) business school, then moved back to Brussels. For many years he worked for a company specialising in intellectual property and patents. Mastering four languages (French, Flemish, English and German), he developed many international contacts.

After the death of his father, Christian moved to Le Cochetay to live in a highly biodiverse habitat. He had four dachshunds (*Jaunet, Gin, Nicolas* and *Noisette*) and many chickens. He was also a gifted beekeeper and established several hives. From year to year, he followed the behaviour and fortunes of numerous local species of animal, bottle-feeding a litter of abandoned badgers in one year of drought.



Christian de Coune's manor of Le Cochetay in Gomzé-Andoumont, Wallonia. (Kathleen Donck).

Since childhood, Christian was passionate about nature and, being thirsty for reading, he discovered falconry. With one of his friends, he learned how to train hawks. After a few years, however, he felt his travel plans were being hindered and so, despite his attachment to his hawk, he decided to entrust it to a falconer friend. Nonetheless, he continued to invest himself considerably in falconry to such an extent that he was elected president of *Club Marie de Bourgogne* and remained so for 30 years.

He became a very active member of the IAF (International Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey) and, despite no longer practising the sport, was elected the organisation's President in 1985. During his 14 years of presidency, he defended the cause of falconry in Belgium and throughout the world, participating in numerous international meetings as well as at the European Commission. With assiduity and determination he made progress in gaining recognition for this hunting art. When he left at the end of his presidency of the IAF, the falconers presented him with an imposing bronze falcon which proudly sat on his desk and which now has a prominent place in my living room.



Bronze recognising the completion of Christian's 14 years as IAF president. (Kathleen Donck).

About us

In 2005 I met Christian, at a dinner party with mutual friends: he was 65 years old, single and without children. I had been widowed for a year and a half and had a daughter, Priscilla, who was then 20 years old. We fell in love!



The first picture of the couple at L'Echo du Passé - Kathou with Christian – 2005. (Kathleen Donck).

I was charmed by his open-mindedness and discovered his warm listening skills. I was seduced by his presence and his atypical look; his stylish moustache and his Indian-style beard giving him a poetic appearance.



The first picture of the couple at Le Cochetay - Kathleen and Christian popping open the champagne – 2005. (Kathleen Donck).

The first time Christian came to my house in Overijse, south of Brussels, we went for a walk in the garden. He asked me what kind of trees I have. I answered “trees”. . . . In fact, I had never taken the time to be interested in trees or to identify them. It was thus thanks to him that I began by discovering a magnificent hundred-year-old silver lime tree (*Tilia tomentosa*) which gives off a delicious perfume when it is in flower in July. Since then, all my trees have had a name!

Christian, an experienced naturalist, loved to observe animals in their habitat. At his home, near Liège in the Cochetay woods, he taught me to distinguish the tracks of wild boar, roe deer, weasels, badgers, moles and rabbits, etc. I was a ‘city girl’ and he passed on his knowledge of the land to me.



Kathleen and Christian planting Darius’ tree in Le Cochetay’s arboretum – 2005. (Kathleen Donck).

Although he complained about a certain colour blindness, he was an erudite ornithologist. To pass on his knowledge he compared the sizes, the behaviour of each species we observed and even managed to describe the colours in detail. I recall one anecdote about this:

Christian gave me Peter Hayman & Rob Hume's *The Shell Easy Bird Guide* to help me become independent in identifying the visitors to my garden. Thinking I had spotted a robin, I looked through his gift and ended up identifying a bullfinch. On texting Christian to let him know what I had found, he congratulated me for having tried to identify the bird but doubted that this species was present in my area. On his return, however, he discerned the bullfinch and was enthusiastic about the enormous progress made by his learner.

His love of trees turned him into a dendrologist. Thus, he created two arboretums in the park at Le Cochetay: in one he planted a multitude of maple species, in the other different species of hornbeam, oak, witch hazel, beech, poplar, plane and willow, as well as a tree that Darius had given him in the Czech Republic. A honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) and a tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), of which he impatiently awaited the first flowering, completed his fabulous collection.

He had long explored the diversity of the *Umbelliferae* (also known to botanists as the *Apiaceae*), a family of nearly 3,500 species. On each visit to France, armed with the five volumes of Jean-Pierre Reduron's *Ombellifères de France*, he set about identifying all the *Umbelliferae* he came across on his walks. At first, for me, nothing resembled an umbellifer more than another umbellifer: a herbaceous plant with an umbel (cluster of flower stems) and tiny flowers at the end of the rays. However, he initiated me. If, when wandering along a path, he didn't have an identification guide at hand but detected an unfamiliar-looking umbellifer, he stopped. I watched him take out his pencil. He took notes: the date of his discovery, the place, its biotope, the size of the plant; he added a description of the flowers (colour, size, petals), the leaves, the stem and/or the fruits, without forgetting to mention whether it was fragrant or not. Next, he carefully removed the parts that are essential for determining the species, taking care not to uproot the plant. With dexterity, he placed them between two blotting papers in a press that he had designed himself.



Christian in full study of umbellifer. (Kathleen Donck).

Back home, he rejoiced when he managed to identify the species and thereby enrich his precious herbarium.

He entrusted me with his 200 most beautiful boards.



Botanical press created by Christian. (Kathleen Donck).



One Apiaceae out of more than 200 herbarium boards. (Kathleen Donck).

It was not long before Christian proposed that I join him in Abu Dhabi where the international falconry conference was taking place. It is there that I had my first initiation into falconry. For me, it was a world of unexpected and improbable discoveries, because since childhood I was afraid when a bird got too close to me. Fortunately, he succeeded in changing me for good.



Kathleen at the Falconers' Barbeque, Le Cochetay –2011. (Kathleen Donck).

As for his passion for travel, it seemed to me that his attraction to India began with his language stay when he was 18. He returned to India more than a dozen times. In Mumbai and Delhi he made many friends to whom he introduced me during one of our trips to Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.



Kathleen and Christian at India's iconic Taj Mahal – 2010. (Kathleen Donck).

When Christian was hosted in Gujarat by the late Maharaja Jyotendrasinhji Kumari and his wife Maharani Kumud Kumari, Maharaja and Maharani of Gondal, a great friendship was born. It was during one of their trips to Europe that the couple stayed with me in Overijse, in August 2010, just two days after our return from Belarus, and had lunch at Christian's house in Cochetay.



Kumud Kumari, Maharani of Gondal, and Régine Vercauteren Drubbel, Kathleen's sister -



L'Echo du Passé, Overijse (Belgium) – August 2010. (Kathleen Donck). Christian with the Maharani and the late Maharaja of Gondal, Le Cochetay – August 2010. Marie-Thérèse Heyvaert's painting of Christian's father Lucien de Coune, can be seen in the background. (Kathleen Donck).

Christian organised a meeting with some local falconers who give the Maharaja and Maharani a brilliant demonstration of their hawks' skill in flight.



Christian with Maharani Kumud Kumari and the late Maharaja Jyotendrasinhji Kumari of Gondal and Eddy De Mol, Sart Risbart (Belgium) – August 2010. (Kathleen Donck).

We were invited to visit Christian's Belarusian friend, Alexander Vintchevski (Sasha) in early August 2010. Christian, his late great friend Georges Wilket and I drove through Germany and Poland from West to East to Grodno where Sasha lives.



Kathleen with Alexander Vintchevski, Belarus – August 2010. (Kathleen Donck).



Alexander Vintchevski, the late Georges Wilket and Christian, Belarus – August 2010. (Kathleen Donck).

Sasha introduced us to his family and friends. He guided us through the deep forest though, unfortunately, we did not meet any bears.

I learned from Christian's friends that, in a hundred countries, he was received with open arms by falconers. On each trip he was interested in the language spoken by his hosts and never failed to enrich his collection of bilingual dictionaries.

His reading was wide and eclectic. He was interested in the Bible as well as the Koran. He read books to prepare for his next trips, had a particular attraction for historical books; monographs on trees, flowers and animals were part of his daily routine, and . . . he also read thrillers.

Christian had valuable qualities and a simplicity that was irresistibly communicative. He was faithful in friendship and devoted himself to his many friends. Several times a year he welcomed foreign falconers visiting Belgium at Le Cochetay and, later, at my home in Overijse. Our homes were open to all. He supported the initiatives of several people in the creation and perpetuation of overseas falconers' and/or nature conservation associations. He maintained his thirst for learning to the end.

Christian loved the joy of reunions and sharing, never missing any opportunity to invite his friends and cousins. Every year in the summer, he organised several barbecues in his garden at Cochetay. One of his annual barbecues brought together about fifty falconers who may or may not be accompanied by their spouses and children, but always with their hawks and often with their dogs. In a warm, convivial atmosphere the discussions were always instructive and full of humour.



Christian and Kathleen at Falconers' Barbeque, Le Cochetay – 2005. (Kathleen Donck).



Annual Falconers' Barbecue, Le Cochetay – 2005. (Kathleen Donck).



*Kathleen and Christian at his last Falconers' Barbeque, Le Cochetay – August 2011.
(Kathleen Donck).*



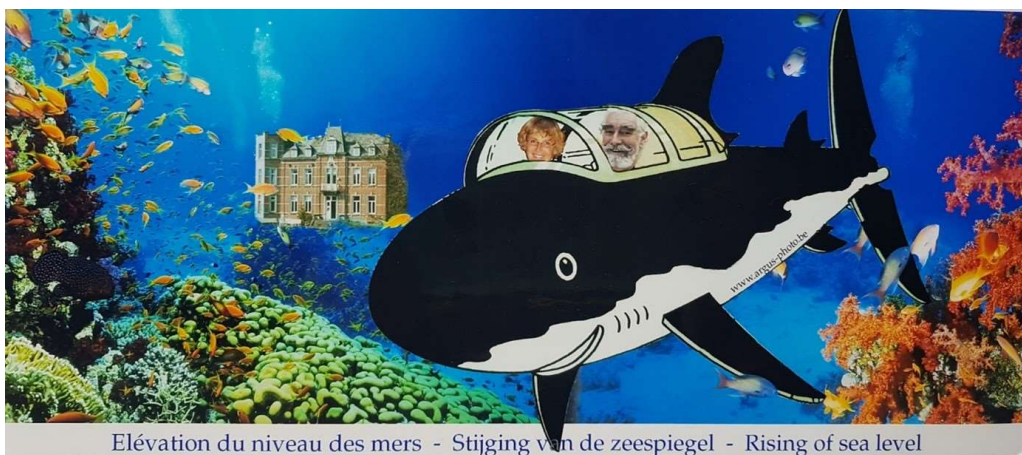
*Régine Vercauteren Drubbel, Kathleen's sister, at Falconers' Barbeque, Le Cochetay —
August 2011. (Kathleen Donck).*

Christian, whilst ever the explorer, nonetheless remained very attached to Belgium. In November 2007, with a group of friends, we took part in a march for the unity of Belgium, which still one country.



Christian, Kathleen and her best friend Francis Lannoy on march for the unity of Belgium, Brussels – 2007. (Kathleen Donck).

To keep in touch with friends near and far, every year he created, with photographer friend Didier Verriest, his own personal greeting card which often incorporated a subtle touch of self-mockery. The first card in which I appear dates from 2006.



New Year's greetings 2006 – photo montage by Didier Verriest. (Kathleen Donck).

He parodied the cover of the album of Tintin's adventures in *The Treasure of Rackham the Red*, giving me the place of *Snowy*



New Year's greetings 2007 – photo montage by Didier Verriest. (Kathleen Donck).



New Year's greetings 2008 – photo montage by Didier Verriest. (Kathleen Donck).



New Year's greetings 2009 – photo montage by Didier Verriest. Greetings cards for 2007, 2008 and 2009 illustrated the theme of falconry. (Kathleen Donck).



New Year's greetings 2010 – photo montage by Didier Verriest. This card shows us both among the umbellifers. (Kathleen Donck).



The last greeting card from 2011. Photo montage by Didier Verriest. (Kathleen Donck).

This card shows us balancing on an oak leaf picked up in my garden. As we lived together alternately in two houses – his, Le Cochetay, and mine, L'Echo du Passé – he inserted a photo of both our homes.

In Belgium, at Lavaux Ste Anne, there is a hunting museum in which a room is now dedicated to falconry thanks to Club Marie de Bourgogne. You can see the evolution of falconry in Belgium. In 2010, on 16th November, falconry was recognised as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. Fortunately, his dream came true thanks to his long-term commitment, his diplomacy (the importance of details in negotiations; his "little words" as he liked to call them), his perseverance and, of course, collaboration with his many specialist colleagues.

On 21st September 2011 Christian passed away at home after a nine-month long lucid battle with cancer. This difficult period brought us even closer together.

At his funeral, in the small church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, located near Cochetay, falconers, their hawks on their fists, made him an astonishing guard of honour that many friends still remember.



The de Coune family vault, Gomzé-Andoumont. (Kathleen Donck).

Christian is buried in the cemetery of Gomzé-Andoumont, near Le Cochetay, in the family vault on which the family coat of arms is engraved.

A eulogy by my sister Régine Vercauteren Drubbel (doctor and primatologist), a nature lover with whom I am very close, was read at the funeral mass:

On July 23, 2005, as I was returning from a long day in a dugout canoe, I discovered your existence, Dear Christian.

I was more than 7,000km away in Africa participating in an expedition where we were looking for the traces of Paul Belloni du Chaillu who was the first explorer of the interior of Gabon 150 years earlier. (Paul Belloni Du Chaillu (July 31st 1831– April 30th 1903) was a French traveller, zoologist and anthropologist. My sister Kathou had sent me a confidential text message with a touch of her characteristic humour: “Sis, I have just met an exceptional man, but don't say anything to Paul du Chaillu yet!”

Later, I met you on your return from Abu Dhabi and Oman, the first of many trips you would make together.

I was immediately touched by your sincerity and the ease with which you went from being a single man surrounded by many friends to a couple surrounded by even more friends. My sister, at first sight so different from you, brought you the joy of living in another universe, with great complicity. With her open-mindedness and generosity, she welcomed your friends as if she had always known them.

You were the man of links, the one who went out to meet people and listened to them. You made many connections, but each one was unique.

You loved to learn in all fields, even medicine and primates. You also gave people the opportunity to learn without borders.

Your arboretum, always in progress, where you kept an eye on each species that you had meticulously chosen and brought back from more or less distant countries: you examined them with the eye of a scientist who has a boundless passion.

Thanks to you my sister was able to discover what falconry, ornithology, dendrology and I would like to add this new concept of umbellifer-ology mean in concrete terms. And thanks to you, Kathou quickly became a naturalist (albeit a somewhat specialised one).

Recently Christian and I had admired her carrying an unhooded hawk on her left fist. I told him how happy I was (I had always known her fear of birds since childhood). Christian answered me that day with a certain pride: “Look at her, she who was afraid of a bird’s feather when I met her, now she even masters birds of prey.”

And when the disease struck you, my sister was there, accompanying you to the end, with love and tenderness, respecting your choices and your wishes.

Your pain was silent and discreet.

What sadness, what infinite sadness breaks our hearts today.

My daughters, Maëlle and Alizée, join me in witnessing the impact that your passions have had on us, even now, tomorrow and after.

Kathleen Donck, L'Echo du Passé, Belgium



2000



2002



Refroidissement de la Planète - De nieuwe ijstijd - The new Iceage

2003



2004



2005

Christian's friend, Belgian photographer Didier Verriest (<https://www.didierverriest.com/>) kindly provided this series of greeting cards made by him for Christian during 2000-2005.

De Coune

Falconers worldwide will forever be indebted to Christian de Coune for his diligent presidency of the International Association for Falconry over many years when it became his way of life. He was a true gentleman with an air of eccentricity that served him well. Always respected wherever he went, he travelled worldwide meeting falconers and administrators, attending conferences and trying to coordinate representation of the many different strands in the practice of our art from different cultures and historical traditions. The difficulty of a constitution accommodating these many demands was a continual challenge and the root of how Christian and I became so involved together in the advancement of IAF.

In the mid eighties and early nineties my own journey through life had taken me to the US to sample what was rumoured to be nirvana for modern falconry. I was fortunate in being hosted by good friends, joined NAFA, gained a Master Falconer's Certificate and attended the annual field meet for several years. I took a couple of peregrines with me, trapped a prairie falcon and enjoyed hawking the west. It was at one of these annual meetings of NAFA that a proposal was brought to the floor for NAFA to join IAF and an open debate was held. It was quite a hot topic with several conflicting constitutional issues being revealed. Geoffrey Pollard and myself were the only UK visitors and we listened respectfully to the range of views with no intent to comment.

Jim Weaver was President and presiding over the meeting. To my astonishment Jim unexpectedly asked me to stand and address the meeting about our experience of IAF in the UK and Europe. I was surprised to say the least but could see Jim's predicament seeking some clarification and, since it was Jack Mavrogordato (1905-1987) who had created IAF whilst also President of the BFC, it presumably was grasping at straws to ask an Englishman? Sadly it was obvious that not enough preparatory work had been done within NAFA to identify the constitutional implications and their possible solutions. Wishing that he had asked Geoffrey Pollard instead of me, I found myself in an unexpected hot seat but had to agree with concerns on both sides. Thinking on my feet I suggested that a solution be found because clearly both IAF and NAFA had much to gain. The meeting rejected the proposal for immediate membership but voted to explore further. It seemed like a good outcome at the time.

Christian de Coune thought otherwise and was understandably quite livid that this unknown Englishman had derailed the plan. Anthony Jack was BFC President, from whom

Christian asked guidance about who this Englishman was who had seemingly scuppered his plans. Christian later told me he learned a new term when Anthony reported me to be a 'loose cannon'! Certainly I had no official standing other than as a member of NAFA. Subsequently my friendships drew me into various discussions about the way forward with my hope being to bring the two organisations together to their mutual advantage. Unexpectedly, Anthony Jack then asked me to accompany him to meet Christian at a DFO meeting where we had a broad discussion in the hopes of smoothing misunderstandings and to find a way forward.

Subsequently our paths were brought together at many meetings around the world as I had become a UK representative to CITES and so was working with Christian at a time when falconry was greatly challenged and we needed an international broad front to deal with several issues. Christian had the idea of formulating a proposal for creation of a CITES Falconry Passport to enable falconers to travel internationally with their hawks without repeated regulatory applications. It was a possible solution in which the promotional work brought Christian and I together.

Frank Bond was legal counsel for NAFA and a friend who seemed a natural member for the team that Christian and I recruited. It was at a CITES Conference of Parties in the Czech Republic that we first all worked together in raising the profile of falconry with CITES officials. It helped a lot when, with the help of local Czech club members, we were able to show CITES officials reputedly rare peregrine falcons nesting on the cathedral in the middle of Prague, easily seen and flying around the city! Having broken the ice we established more personal relationships and were invited to draft and submit a proposal to be considered and taken forward in the CITES agenda.

Christian had also arranged for us to attend a field meet out in the country, my first experience of eagles flying roe deer. Frank and I were rather out of our depth with East European languages whilst Christian was more at ease. It was apparent that friendlier relationships were developing with clear goals to be achieved.

My presence on the UK Hawk Board on behalf of BFC was able to bring support for a growing idea and ultimately brought NAFA into a working relationship with IAF. Our final team for a working group for our CITES project was Christian de Coune IAF, Frank Bond NAFA, Dr Tim Kimmel NAFA, Dr Robert Kenward UK, Anthony Crosswell UK Hawk Board and BFC and Dr Nick Fox UK Hawk Board and Middle Eastern interests. Work over three years had finally come together at the CITES CoP in Harare, Zimbabwe where we were

kindly hosted and sponsored for our visit. Gary Stafford generously gave us accommodation at his lakeside holiday camp a few miles from the city and a car, whilst other members of the Zimbabwe Falconers' Club hosted us to a safari camp for hawking and shooting in the south of the country, a magical experience when Tim Kimmel and I were woken at 2.00am by a loud purring sound that turned out to be leopards wandering around the camp at night! There were many game species available for our African experience. The best falcon flight we saw was a female peregrine who caught a green pigeon flushed from a fig tree.



Meeting in Harare in 1997. From left: Dr Nick Fox, Christian de Coune, Dr Tim Kimmel, Anthony Crosswell, Frank Bond (Dr Nick Fox).

Our attendance of the Conference of the Parties for CITES in Harare enabled the final draft of our proposal for a CITES approved Falconry Passport for individual birds for international travel to be voted. Approval was a huge success for IAF, under Christian's presidency, during the preparation of which was an extended period of time bringing NAFA and IAF into relationship and dialogue enabling NAFA Board members to see the workings and increasingly be involved.

A while later, Frank Bond and I were hawking on Jim Weaver's ranch in southern New Mexico where we successfully entered his young jerkin of the year. That evening conversation turned to options for a way forward to resolve the incompatibility of the constitutions of IAF and NAFA. It was obvious that IAF needed a meeting to address the issue and it didn't take much persuasion for Frank as expert legal counsel to attend and help us redraft the contentious issues. He discussed the idea with the NAFA board and they asked him to have further discussions. It fell to me to approach Christian and report possibilities to BFC and Hawk Board.

An IAF meeting was arranged to be held in Brussels for member representatives and all other interested parties with the purpose of preparing a new IAF constitution. If all went well after approval by NAFA Board of Directors, it could then be put to all members and hopefully lead to an application from NAFA to join IAF.

I had agreed to act as secretary to organise and record discussions whilst others contributed a meeting room and accommodation for attendees. The meeting in Brussels took a whole weekend and was heavily supported by a majority of member countries with many tough negotiations in a generally tense atmosphere. The revised constitution fundamentally changed the nature of IAF into an organisation which would carry out international representation for each member country for their version of falconry as they each conducted the sport in that part of the world. It was a fundamental shift, letting go of any control dictating how falconry should be conducted and leaving that responsibility to be agreed by the clubs within each country. This enabled IAF to become the recognised international body of representation as was already being done in some ways with governments and conferences. It was a difficult line to tread, often requiring representation of seeming different versions of falconry to be respected. We were fortunate in having such an experienced lawyer as Frank Bond to create a document encompassing all of these issues in a new constitution, expertise he had already gained in dealing with governmental bodies and constitutional issues around the world.

To everyone's surprise we made remarkable progress and ended the weekend with a new draft constitution for Frank to report to NAFA's Board and then the NAFA membership at that year's AGM November field meet. It was supported by their membership to enable application for joining IAF at the next meeting being hosted in 1998 by Portugal. At that

meeting the constitutional changes could be approved by IAF members and then NAFA membership application be proposed and approved.

It was under the presidency of Christian de Coune that all of this had been achieved and Christian had achieved his great goal of bringing NAFA into IAF. As a part of the changes, it had had been agreed that there would be a new revolving presidential system drawn from each region of the world. Following the meeting in Brussels Christian had given notice that he considered his presidency completed and that his term of office would end with the adoption of the new constitution in Portugal.

Patrick Morel travels to Scotland each year for grouse hawking and had invited me to visit him and Gilles Nortier at Alvie, which I did. Of course, during my stay we discussed the upcoming changes and what needed to be done since IAF would need a new president and restructuring of its operations. There were no obvious candidates who could command unbiased support. Hawking on a nearby moor at Lochindorb were the regular group of Italian falconers, Umberto Caproni, Fulco Tosti di Valminuta and his double cousin Ferrante ("Frikki") Pratesi. Patrick suggested that we discuss the matter with them and we did whilst enjoying some midge free grouse hawking! During our chats and my subsequent visit, Frikki Pratesi thankfully agreed to take on the role of president and see IAF through the changes if I would agree to do the work for him which I agreed to.

Thankfully our Portuguese hosts to IAF organised an amazing combined field meet and IAF AGM, further blessed with perfect weather for our members flying hawks. All interested parties attended, even some not so familiar with recent workings, to debate the way forward and mark with much appreciation Christian's achievements.

Invited to his last birthday party, Jenny and I drove to Belgium and stayed overnight with Patrick and Françoise Morel who drove us to Le Cochetay, on the way stopping to pick a bunch of cow parsley, a thoughtful gift from Françoise to Christian since they were, surprisingly, his favourite flower. Christian was unwell but did not show it as he was bright and cheerful for an outdoor summer party. Seated in the sunshine we had a long reminiscence of our years together. I borrowed a sparrowhawk from Xavier and took a photograph of Christian talking about his memories of flying them many years before in his youth. We had not often spoken in such a personal manner and it was very touching when we left and he said: "I have wanted to say that time has done its job and made us friends, thank you."

Our relationship had started with some antipathy due to events out of our control and was then often strained through a period of big change which deeply affected many of us but mostly Christian for whom IAF had been his way of being.

Soon after the party Christian died. Sadly, today most falconers are unaware of how much he contributed to what IAF has grown into with vast worldwide membership and resources.

Anthony Crosswell, England, UK

Christian de Coune, a personal reflection from António Carapuço.

In 1994 the *Associação Portuguesa de Falcoaria* was a fresh new member of the International Association for Falconry. As usual the President, Christian de Coune, posed us several questions by letter (no WhatsApp or email at the time) about Portuguese falconry. Besides answering those questions I, and other Portuguese friends, decided to travel to Germany and attend the IAF conference held by the DFO. It was very exciting to meet a great number of falconers, some of them legends to us.

Trying to remember the details of that meeting, memories arise of good friends that are no longer with us. One of them was Eckart Schormair, the DFO President, who gave us a very warming welcome. We later became good friends and enjoyed many hawking days in a few different countries. I learned a lot from Eckart, a superb falconer and friend.

It was there that I first met Christian, a figure emerged as if from an ancient falconry book or a Hergé story. Christian always had a nice word to say for the small clubs and promoted the expansion of falconry and IAF. In the meeting several threats to falconry were discussed. We were not aware of these, and they came as a shock for us, but we witnessed how committed Christian was in tackling those problems. At that time it was not uncommon that one would take a falcon from the wild to go hawking. Legislation in some countries was not clear about this and breeders were scarce and far. Christian was very keen to condemn this practice where it was not legal. It proved to be a wise and prescient stance, as falconers were often pointed to

by misguided environmentalists as being the great cause of declines in hawk populations, no matter the species.

A few years later Christian invited me to become the IAF Treasurer. It was an honour for me and, despite knowing nothing about the IAF finances, I accepted. To my great surprise I found an organisation sponsored by Christian's own pocket. I discussed this situation with him and decided to write a letter to all members describing the impractical situation. Christian was reluctant but my insistence forced him to accept. I was happy to see Christian's relief when, finally, he could be refunded his many travel expenses incurred in the defence of falconry.

Perhaps nowadays Christian's role in defending falconry is a bit lost in time. It seems that attempts to ban falconry only happen today. The ones that remember Christian's IAF presidency are very aware of how many times falconry was in danger. At that time the European Union didn't work like today. The Euro currency didn't exist and each country had its own policy. CITES and IUCN were battlegrounds where all the fingers pointed to falconers. Christian started to change those minds. He attended all the conferences that he could, CITES, FACE, IUCN and more. I believe that he wrote thousands of letters in support of falconry to institutions and governments. Eventually he got support with this exhausting task but, at the very beginning, it was a one man show.

It was during his presidency that IAF changed from a gentlemen's club to, firstly, a European organisation and, later, to an international one. We worked together for many years, sharing field meetings across the world, hotel rooms with long hours of discussion to find common positions, falconry tales in restaurants. Most of all, we made friends for life.

I learned a lot from Christian and built a great respect for a person that truly dedicated his life to defending the passion of many. I thank him as a friend and falconer.

António Carapuço, Portugal, IAF Treasurer

Friend and colleague Christian

I am very pleased to be asked to pay tribute to this great man.

I had a very close relationship and friendship with Christian when I was President of *Dansk Falkonerselskab* (Danish Falconry Society) from 1987-92.

In 1987 Christian and I jointly organised a waiting on demonstration with falconer friends Patrick Morel and Eckart Schormair, flying peregrines and a gyrfalcon at partridges at a beautiful moor in western Denmark. This demonstration, in front of the highest government council (*Vildtforvaltningsrådet*) in Denmark, was a tremendous success and the vast majority of the council, who before the demonstration were very negative, voted in favour of immediate legalisation of falconry in Denmark. The administration of the council prepared legalisation and it was only as a result of serious misinformation from the chief advisor of The Ministry of Environment that falconry remained banned for several more years.

Christian made an enormous passionate work in our effort to reintroduce legal falconry to Denmark.

With unbeatable energy, Christian organised lobbying by falconry societies, universities, leading veterinarians, zoos, the World Wildlife Fund and UNESCO etc. – altogether over 200 correspondents from all over the world sent sympathetic letters to Danish conservative/liberal ministers, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and Minister of Environment, Per Stig Moeller.

In 1993 a new revised Hunting Law was to be decided by the Danish Parliament.

The Danish Ornithological Club (*Dansk Ornitologisk Forening*) organised a bitter campaign against reintroducing falconry in Denmark, making considerable advances to the Danish Hunting Association (*Danmarks Jægerforbund*) to convince them to vote against falconry and, sadly enough, they had success. In addition, environmental organisations such as Denmark's Nature Union (*Danmarks Naturfredningsforening*), and WWF Denmark were convinced by the ornithologists' misinformation. They even went so far as to suggest that all European birds kept in captivity should be either killed or released!

In spite of these mighty organisations with over 500 000 members altogether in Denmark (about 10% of the total Danish population), Minister of Environment Per Stig Moeller, because of Christian's immense efforts, was convinced by the sympathetic letters from great environmental figureheads all over the world, and bravely recommended that the Danish Parliament should legalise falconry in the Hunting Law.

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FALCONRY
AND CONSERVATION OF BIRDS OF PREY

President
Christian de Coune
"Le Cochetay"
B-4140 Comzé-Andoumont
Belgium
Tel: 041/68.73.69

Mr Bogyai Frigés
Vice-President
Dér u. 19
H-1028 BUDAPEST
Hongrie

Le Cochetay, 27 septembre 1991

Dear Friend,

thank you for your letter of 11.09.91.

I take due note that I shall have to correspond with you in the future.

I used to write in German to Istvan Bechtold but my English is better.

I understand from your letter that you will take the necessary action to support the Danish falconry.

We need a great number of letters to be written to Denmark, therefore I would be very grateful to you if you could convince other organisations in your country to write too.

I'm thinking for instance to hunters' associations and if possible to other organisations. The more the better.

Thank you very much in advance.

Contrary to what I wrote in my circular, our General Meeting will not take place in Switzerland but in Brussels at the same date.

Sincerely,



Christian.

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FALCONRY
AND CONSERVATION OF BIRDS OF PREY

President
Christian de Coune
"Le Cochetay"
B-4140 Gomzé-Andoumont
Belgium
Tel: 041/68.73.69

3rd August 1991

C I R C U L A R

FALCONRY IS THREATENED IN DENMARK

DANISH FALCONERS NEED YOU

The Danish law is currently being revised.

Anti-hunting groups proposed the ban on some sort of duck shooting.

Duck is a very important game in Denmark.

Hunters were ready to make concessions in exchange of the withdrawal of the opposition to that particular type of duck shooting.

As a result, hunters declared officially their opposition to the legalisation of falconry in the future law.

DANISH HUNTERS SOLD THEIR LITTLE SISTER TO THE ANTI-HUNTERS!

Nobody is left in Denmark to support the legalisation of falconry.

YOU ARE THE ONLY SUPPORT OF FALCONRY IN DENMARK

The final draft law will be published in October.
Unless a miracle occurs, it will contain the ban on falconry.

If so, I shall ask you to write to the Danish authorities.

Your letter will have to reach Denmark within a week after the reception of my next circular.

IAF ASKS YOU:

- 1.- Be prepared.
- 2.- Contact all hunters' organisations in your country and explain them the situation. Ask them to be prepared to write. If needed help them drafting the letter, or draft it yourself.
- 3.- Contact every possible organisation, like wildlife management organisations, game biologists, etc... and do like 2.-
- 4.- Contact prominent personalities, like scientists, politicians, writers, etc... and do like 2.-

Last year I asked you to write to the Spanish authorities.

Most of you did it (sorry to say: not all of you) and so did non-member falconers' associations, hunters' associations, bird of prey conservation organisations, etc..

In total, 32 different organisations have sent at least one letter.

That's not bad at all.

We must beat the "Spanish record"!

I would like 100 (hundred!) letters to be sent.

It's only three times more.

Please could you see to it that three times more letters than for Spain be written from your country to Denmark?

Don't worry if the organisations that write are only small ones, nobody will check...

Better 5 small ones than one big.

Please start now preparing our campaign.

You have only two months.

NO EFFORT MAY BE SPARED.

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO DENMARK COULD ALSO HAPPEN TO YOUR COUNTRY.

The Danish commission for the revision of the law has made the following statement:

"It is the parties opinion that this Act ought to get a content, which shall make it possible to use it as a lever in the "endeavours to influence the remaining EEC countries to carry out similar provisions in connection with hunting."

Please don't write now to Denmark, wait for the green light.

Thank you very much in advance.

Please note Niels Tøttrup's new address:

Bøgevej, 4
DK-8370 HADSTEN
tel: 86 98 26 27

I.A.F. GENRAL MEETING 1991

Our general meeting will be held in Switzerland, near Bern
12th December

The invitations and the agenda will be sent later on to the members.

If there is anything you would like to be discussed at the meeting, please let me know as soon as possible.

Support to Danish falconers, organised by Christian. (Frigyes Bogyai's archive).

Sadly enough, Denmark got a socialist government in January 1993, one that was deeply involved with the mighty organisations, with the result that falconry was still banned under the Hunting Law of 1993.

It was almost an unbearable disappointment for Christian and the Danish falconers. In 1993, all hope was destroyed for many, and I am sorry to say I gave up. Instead, I went to Scotland to practise the magnificent waiting on flight with peregrines at grouse. because Hunting Laws in Denmark last almost untouched for 25-40 years.

As a result of with my friendship with Christian, I was introduced to and became very good friends with Umberto Caproni, Roger Upton and Stephen Frank, among other good friends. They were mentors to me and introduced me to great grouse hawking with peregrines in Scotland. In particular, Umberto Caproni invited me to his lodge for 15 years in a row and Roger Upton invited me to hawk together with him in northern Scotland for 14 days in 1992. Since my introduction to the sport in the late 1980s, I took my peregrines to Scotland and have, for about 30 years now, been lucky to experience this unbeatable and beautiful sport on a moor in southern Scotland. As President of the Danish Falconry Society, I also made very good friends with other European Presidents – amongst others Anthony Jack of the British Falconers' Club.

In 1994 the Danish Falconry Society was replaced by the Danish Falconry Club, which has since represented Danish falconers in IAF.

A long, long time of interminable waiting was endured but, happily enough, falconry was finally legalised in 2018 – thanks to the tremendous work of Danish falconers for almost 30 years – especially with enormous effort from Frank Skaarup Hansen (President of the Danish Falconry Club for 10 years) and from the Club's two other Presidents, Tage Jessen and René Rask Bruun. However, thanks are also due to many other Danish falconers.

Christian helped and supported the Danish falconers until his too early death and I am sorry to say that he did not experience the reintroduction of legal falconry to Denmark.

Niels Toettrup, Denmark

My friend Christian de Coune

I first met Christian de Coune in 1990 at a meeting of the DFO in Freising. This meeting was, however, preceded by some relevant earlier events. Having never hunted with a hawk myself, I was very interested in birds of prey, completing my university diploma on the osprey. I read everything about falconry that was available in the Soviet Union, but there was little literature and I knew of no falconers in the Belarusian part of the USSR. I did once get a goshawk from a zoo, having previously witnessed a demonstration of the aggressiveness of a recently captured and trained wild goshawk by Ukrainians at the All-Union Conference on Birds of Prey in Kiev, 1988. I have a clear recollection of how this hawk, in the presence of a crowd of people, attacked a cage containing a pigeon until it got inside. I decided that taming such a hawk would not be very difficult and so obtained and dutifully trained my hawk . . . until eventually it contracted something from the pigeons I was using and died. I never tried to become a falconer again. However, in 1989, when I was already working in Grodno at the university, someone sent me an invitation to the annual meeting of *Gniazdo Sokolników* in Rokosowo, Poland. At that time, in Gorbachev's era, Poland was already accessible to visitors with a Soviet passport. Not even a visa was needed, only an exit permit from the USSR, although to get the latter you had to stand in line for many hours with hundreds of people just to submit documents. The permit was then usually ready in a week or two. In Rokosowo I saw falconry for the first time and met many excellent Polish and German falconers, some of whom I am still friends with to this day, such as Elisabeth Breidenstein (Leix), Günther Trommer, Hans-Kurt Hussong, Henryk Mąka and others. New German acquaintances, learning that I was engaged in the study of birds of prey, invited me to the DFO meeting in 1990.

Kurt Hussong sent me an official invitation six months before the meeting. Still being under the Soviet Union, it was not so easy to leave it for a capitalist country. I spent the whole winter learning German because I had studied English at school and university. I will make a small digression, which I hope will be of interest to readers who are not aware of the conditions in which people then lived in the USSR. The Polish border was near Grodno, and so we used to go to Poland about once a month to sell some Soviet goods and earn money or buy Polish goods. Going to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was quite another matter. The German visa was not a problem at all: I do not even remember how I obtained it,

I think through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Byelorussian SSR. By contrast, it took me several months to get the permission from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to go to the FRG. To do this, I had to get letters of recommendation from the university management, the Komsomol organisation, the trade union and the local KGB, etc. According to the invitation, I was expected to report on the situation of birds of prey in the USSR. I had to go to Moscow to see and meet with Prof. Vladimir Galushin, whom I met in 1988. I translated everything he told me about the situation of different species of raptors into German and, with the mother of my school friend, a German translator, I practised my pronunciation. When the "Moscow-Wunsdorf" train stopped in my town in October 1990, I was the only passenger in Grodno station who was going to take it. Getting to capitalist countries from the USSR was almost impossible at the time.

The meeting of falconers in Freising was no less interesting than that in Rokosovo. I was particularly fascinated by the German falconers' work on peregrine restoration in Germany. I did not have to give a presentation, thankfully, since I feared doing so because of my lack of experience in English or German. There were falconers from almost all over Europe, all of whom were interested in life in the Soviet Union and actively asked me questions. In parallel with the field meeting, as usual, there were IAF meetings. Christian and I met in a bar one evening. We talked and exchanged addresses.

A year or two later I received a letter from Christian asking for help. As IAF President he was reporting the threat of a continued ban on falconry in Denmark and asked me to organise more pro-falconry letters to the three Danish ministers. I had a large list of contacts of conservationists and ornithologists from all over the Soviet Union and I mailed about 200 requests for help. In addition, I negotiated with the heads of about ten organisations in Grodno and Minsk (University, Zoo, Institute of Zoology, etc.) and typed the necessary letters on the forms received from them. I sent them to Denmark myself after signing and forwarded copies to Christian. There were no computer facilities available then at the University, at which the only electronic computer took up an entire room. However, I found a single typewriter with English type in the Biochemistry Department.

Unfortunately, our letters did not help. It is true that the Danish government was about to change its attitude to falconry, but suddenly it resigned. The new government did not read our letters and retained the ban on falconry. Unexpectedly, I then received a big book about the world's birds of prey in English from Christian. Such literature was not available in the

Soviet Union and I was very delighted with this gift. Christian then told me that, thanks to my work, more than 20 letters had been sent from the Soviet Union, including those from Belarus prepared by me. He was astonished by such a response, because only the French falconers sent more letters although these had been from a standard format, completely copied except for the address details. We corresponded by letter and one day Christian asked me if there was anything he could do for me. By then the USSR had already collapsed. I was reading Zoology at the University of Grodno, was married and my wife and I were expecting our first son. I was chronically short of money even with part-time jobs, because a full-time salary at the University was the equivalent of about \$20 a month. The shops were half-empty. Sometimes socks and other goods were raffled off in the University's department among the lecturers. Often you couldn't buy a jacket, for instance, or a television set, with money unless you had a special voucher for that item I was already prepared by then to go to work abroad for a few months, in some zoo, for example, and so I asked Christian if he could help me make some extra money to make ends meet and keep working with birds of prey. I was thrilled when Christian said yes and invited me to stay with him in Belgium from August to October 1993. I took leave from the University, got a Belgian visa in Moscow and took a bus from Poland to Brussels in one day.

While I was working at the University, between 1993 and 1998 I came to Belgium every year and Christian found me work with his many friends and acquaintances. For the last two years, thanks to his good acquaintance with the famous ornithologist Dr. Pierre Devillers at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. I had the opportunity to do an internship there. I usually stayed at Christian's manor of Le Cochetay in Gomzé-Andoumont, Wallonia, or in a Brussels flat when I did my internship in Brussels. In total I must have spent more than a year in Belgium and usually all that time was spent interacting with Christian. We talked about birds of prey, falconry, nature, different countries and politics. Despite the fact that he lived practically alone at the time, he liked socialising and regularly invited friends over for dinner or lunch. He was a great cook when he had the time and inclination. He especially liked to have a barbecue in his park and demonstrate his special trick of spectacularly opening a bottle of champagne with an old sabre, cutting off the head of the bottle together with the cork.

Christian came to Belarus several times, and we travelled with him almost all over the country. He came in his own car, though his Belgian friend Georges Wilket was always driving. Georges liked to drive whereas Christian did not. He even joked "I don't like two

things with a car: to drive and to be driven.” He always dressed tastefully and neatly, but he didn't like to stand out. When I met him he had a small Renault Scenic car. He said that some Belgian falconers had tried to persuade him that the President of *Club Marie de Bourgogne* and the IAF should have a nicer car, but he laughed off these recommendations as he drove the car almost always alone, trying to be eco-friendly and save on fuel. The only disadvantage of this Renault model was that the boot was too small for travelling to Belarus. Later, Christian did buy a Rover. It was 112km from home to Brussels and Christian counted kestrels along the road every time. If I was sitting next to him, I took notes.

Christian always came in August when I was on holiday. During his first visit in 1994, we visited the National Park in Belovezhskaya Pushcha, saw European bison in the wild and visited the hall in the palace in Viskuly where the leaders of three countries had signed the dissolution of the USSR. We also visited the Belarusian peat bogs. In Vitebsk we met Dr Vladimir Ivanovsky, a Belarussian ornithologist who studies birds of prey, and his pupil, Dmitry Shamovich, a falconer who flew at grouse. Whilst Christian was very complimentary about the Republic of Belarus's legislation which had always allowed hawking, allocating quarry seasons and species alongside six species of raptors to be employed, falconry was not popular in Belarus at the time. Consequently, although Christian wanted very much to increase the number of IAF members, there was no one to even lobby for this as there were, at most, three people involved in the sport.

In 1998, the three of us went to Ukraine with Christian and George. In one month we travelled from Belarus via Kiev and Melitopol to the Crimea and back via Odessa and Lviv. Christian, by the way, had been involved on behalf of the IAF in CoPs and CITES meetings around the world and knew the national delegates from different countries. In Kiev he introduced me to Dr Valentin Serebryakov who gave us contacts for ornithologists along our route. In Kiev and Crimea we also met Ukrainian falconers who showed us hawking with peregrines. Unfortunately, none of them spoke English at the time and they had no organisation, and so could not join the IAF.



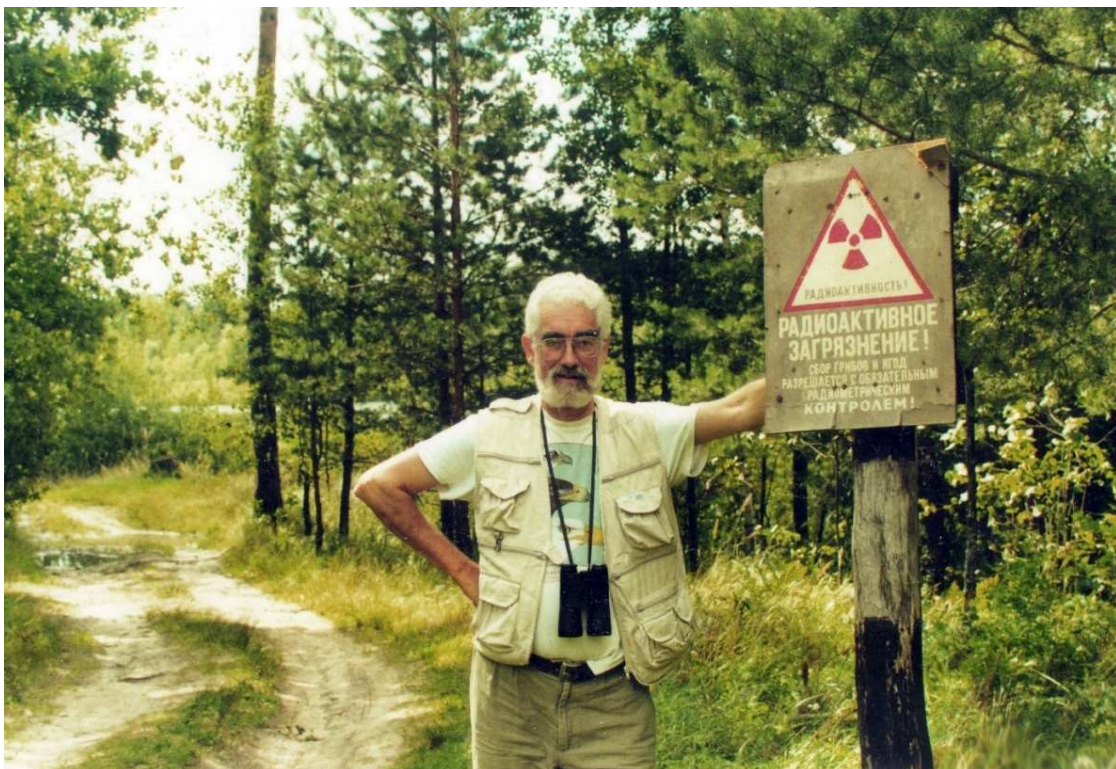
Veteran spruce in Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park (Belarus) in 1994. Christian and Mikalai Cherkas, a local ornithologist. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian, Alexandre Vintchevski, ornithologist Mikalai Cherkas and Georges Wilket in Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park in front of Mikalai's house, 1994. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Dinner in Grodno, Belarus. From left to right: Christian, Georges Wilket, Yauheni Vintchevski (father of Alexandre and Dzmitry, who take a photo), Ludmila Vintchevskaya (Alexandre and Dzmitry's mother), Dzmitry Vinchevski (brother of Alexandre's brother). (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian in radiation-contaminated zone after Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Southern Belarus, 1998. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Plant identification near abandoned palace in Belarus, 1994. Christian and Georges Wilket. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian in Belarus, 1994: extensive agriculture leaves weeds and insects on fields which provide food for the grey partridge. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian with a Montagu's harrier chick near Grodno, checking results of the IAF-ZBTAP conservation project in 1994. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian, Alexandre and Georges Wilket on the outskirts of Sevastopol, Crimea (Ukraine), 1998. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Ukrainian falconers Serhiy Prokopenko and Hanna Hirchinska with Christian in the Crimea, 1998. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



T-80 and T-55 tanks with connected barrels – a favourite place for tourists' photos in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital. Dr. Valentin Serebryakov, Christian de Coune and Alexandre Vintchevski in 1998. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Meeting with Ukrainian ornithologists (from left to right): Anatoliy Tereshchuk, Aleksei Dashenko, Sergei Domashevskiy, Christian, Valeriy Boyarskiy, Alexandre Vintchevski and Dr. Valentin Serebryakov. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian at Liadskie village in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian with Georges Wilket, signing Belovezhskaya Pushcha's honoured guests' book, 1994. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian, ornithologist Mikalai Cherkas, and Alexander in Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian and Georges at clothes market in Grodno, 1998. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian testing the local spirit in Belovezhskaya Pushcha, 1998. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Picnic on the bank of the Dnieper near Kanev Nature Reserve (not too far from Kyiv) with Ukrainian scientists. From left: Alexander, Georges, Dr. Valentin Serebryakov and Christian, 1998. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Picnic with Ukrainian scientists on Dnieper's bank near Kanev Nature Reserve. Facing us, from left, Dr. Valentin Serebryakov and Christian, 1998. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Dinner in Kyiv, 1998. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Alexander Grinchenko and Christian in Sevastopol in the Crimea, Ukraine, 1998. The monument commemorates site of Sevastopol's foundation. (Alexandre Vintchevski).



Christian liked to take photographs of the countryside wherever he travelled. Koudrichi village near Pinsk, Belarus. (Photo by Christian de Coune, from Alexandre Vintchevski's archive).



Wooden Catholic church in Belarus. (Photo: Christian de Coune, courtesy of Alexandre Vintchevski).



White stork's nest on pole in Belarusian village. (Photo: Christian de Coune, from Alexandre Vintchevski's archive).

In 1993, on my first visit to Belgium, Christian helped me get a visa to the UK and we attended the first global workshop on harriers together in Canterbury, Kent, where I spoke on the breeding biology of the marsh harrier in Belarus. Legends Ian Newton and Frances Hamerstrom also spoke here. After Kent, I visited London for the first time thanks to Christian.

In 1995 Christian was invited to speak at an International Conference on Trade and Wildlife Conservation in Taiwan, organised and funded by Mr Colin Kuo, an entrepreneur who knew Christian from CoP CITES. Christian suggested inviting a representative from Belarus to increase the countries represented. We went to Taiwan together, where I made a presentation on the situation of wildlife conservation in the former Soviet Union.

We were also invited together to participate in the Global Birdwatchers' Conference in Gujarat, India, in 2010. After the conference, Christian asked permission from his old friends

from His Highness Maharaja Jyotendrasinhji of Gondal's family for my ornithologist brother Dzmityr and I to visit them. They graciously received us all and we were amazed at the simplicity and cordiality of these people. It should be noted that Christian had a special relationship with India. After his graduation, his grandfather gave him some gold coins as a reward. Christian sold these coins and went to India for a few months with the money. He travelled to India often and for long periods and in total, he said, he spent more than a year there. He loved India very much and passed on this love to me. His love for travel took him to the Andaman Islands in the 1960s, then still little explored and rarely visited by tourists, as the locals were very aggressive towards visitors. The former Belgian king, Leopold III, found out about his trip and invited the young man for a talk.

In 1993, together with other enthusiasts, I had set up the Western Belarusian Society for the Protection of Birds of Prey in Grodno, of which I was elected President. Since the IAF had falconry and the protection of birds of prey in its name, Christian suggested that our Society's projects should somehow be taken under the guardianship of the IAF. This work was sponsored by well-known falconers such as Count Umberto Caproni di Taliedo. Former DFO President Eckart Schormair donated 1,000 German marks to the society, paid by his insurance company for a hawk killed on a power line. The Society's work included identifying the nests of rare species of birds of prey and handing them over to the state for protection, feeding wintering golden eagles and white-tailed sea eagles, building artificial nests for rare species and identifying the nests of Montagu's harrier in agricultural fields and preventing their destruction by harvesting machinery. Together with Christian I attended several IAF meetings in Germany and France in the autumn of 1990, where I reported on our joint conservation work.

In his manor, Christian had a small office, filled from table to ceiling with legal (juridical) and ornithological literature. If there were no FACE meetings in Brussels or some conference of the parties abroad, he worked there from morning until night: making phone calls, dealing with correspondence and preparing the next IAF newsletter with the minutes of the annual meeting and reports of all the participants.

Christian was a very kind man, and was always ready to come to the rescue. I remember when my eldest son began to develop a strange illness, during which he periodically began to suffocate for no apparent reason and ended up in intensive care. The doctors in Belarus were perplexed as to the cause. Christian arranged for Patrick Morel to examine my son in

Belgium. Luckily, in the end, one of the Belarusian doctors recommended an allergy test and the cause turned out to be an allergy to wheat protein. My child was saved.

From 2006 to 2009 I worked as a development officer from Belarus for BirdLife Europe, which was based in Brussels. I started seeing Christian and his partner Kathleen Donck again quite often. He also visited Belarus with George again at that time. Christian was very fond of Eastern Europe, and we came to the conclusion that, because of limited progress and state ownership of the land, Belarus, for example, still looks like Belgium a hundred years ago: wild forests, rivers, lots of marshes and species that are rare in Western Europe are common. I received the last letter from Christian in the summer of 2011, when I was working on an ornithological expedition funded by Arabian falconers to study the houbara bustard in Kazakhstan. In my spare time I then managed to find more than 40 nests of the rare pallid harrier, which I was happy to share with Christian.

Christian did not graduate from university, but was still very inquisitive and took various paid courses at the University of Liège to develop himself. He was always interested in plants and in the field he wore a waistcoat with a large pocket that could hold a huge illustrated guide to the plants of Western Europe. He knew plants better than I did. One day in the 2000s, after a break in live communication, I discovered that Christian was intensively studying plants of the *Umbelliferae* family. He attended university lectures by a botanist specialised in this family and bought special guides and equipment for making herbariums. He explained to me that his choice was simple. He realised that he could not deal with all plants and in order to specialise he decided to choose the most difficult family. He certainly succeeded. Christian rolled excessively dried and properly spaced small umbrella plants, along with their name, in plastic and gave them to his friends to use as a plate stand.

Christian was very fond of humour and came up with many original jokes himself. For instance, he used to complain to me that people would ask him if he painted his eyebrows, as they were very dark in comparison to his grey head, and he would reply that no, he painted his head to avoid looking like a boy. I also remember one time he was picking me up at the airport in his car and a policeman accosted him because the car had been parked in a prohibited area. The policeman asked him if he had any idea why he was asking for his ID, to which Christian joked that he probably wanted to know his birthday. The joke was an expensive one, but is still fresh in my mind.

I have not told you here about Christian's work in protecting falconry. I think many of his friends and colleagues know more on this and will write about it. I was probably fortunate to be in more frequent contact with this wonderful man than any of my friends, with the exception of Kathou, and so I decided to tell the story of our acquaintance and his habits. Even ten years after his death, I can't believe he's gone. I constantly want to write to or call a friend who was born a year later than my father. I wish my father knew foreign languages and they could have communicated without intermediaries. Christian was a very bright, cheerful man, though serious, judicious and logical when it was needed. He helped me a lot during the difficult 1990s. Now it's hard to even imagine what I would have been without his help. He was very influential in shaping me as a person, even though I met him in my twenties. I would like someone to remember me with the same warmth and affection as I remember Christian de Coune: a friend, a naturalist, a Belgian, a citizen of the world.

Alexandre Vintchevski, Minsk, Belarus.

Memories of Christian de Coune

I met Christian in 1994, a time of great political uncertainty in South Africa, yet he braved the risks and stayed some days with me before heading out to meet other falconers I introduced to him, both in the Cape and elsewhere in the Republic. On the way back from collecting him at the airport we had to stop to look at every bird, as most were new to him. One was a small brown bird, and he asked me what it was. I didn't know but looked in the book and mis-identified it as a lark. "How interesting" he said, "I thought it was a pipit." I re-checked the book and, sure enough, it was a pipit!

We spent a very happy time together, though there was not much hawking on that visit, as my bird had just come out of the moult and was still getting fit. However, the evenings were very jolly, with Christian confessing that he was a wine sponge. Being a wine farmer, I think he couldn't believe his luck!

Christian helped me with my trademark registration in the EU, at no cost. He was very generous with his time and expertise. His knowledge on a huge variety of subjects was phenomenal.

In turn, my wife and I made a visit to Christian in Belgium and were his guests at Le Cochetay. What a place! What hospitality! He took us on a grand tour of Belgium and spoiled

us beyond expression. We visited some falconers, among them Patrick Morel and his wife Françoise, who likewise were very kind to us.

The last time I saw him was two weeks before his passing. It was a sad visit, and yet he was ever the complete gentleman. He took me to a falconers' feast, of snails, even though at that stage he could hardly eat anything. In spite of his illness he was still driving. It was a sad farewell when I left, knowing that we would not see each other again.

I miss his graciousness, gentleness, attention to detail and consummate diplomacy.

Dr. Edmund Oettlé B.V.Sc. Ph.D., Fisantekuil, Wellington, South Africa

A few thoughts on Christian de Coune

Christian was the last classic aristocratic falconer and had a most distinguished appearance, particularly from his outfit and his well-groomed expression. Wherever he appeared at international falconry conferences, everyone who did not know him personally felt a great deal of respect and he cast a spell over everyone equally. What was especially impressive, furthermore, was his perpetual engagement (often in the background) with falconry-related issues with which he achieved an enormous amount, right up to the EU Parliament. He was certainly one of the most selfless people I knew and, indeed, falconry politics was his life. He saw falconry as a pure art and a great responsibility and, therefore, had no understanding at all for bumbling and lack of style.

Unfortunately, Christian de Coune was often not understood by many young falconers, especially those who view falconry as a pure sport or a cool pastime. He valued every falconer who was inherently consistent from their personal attire to their hawk's furniture. He got into conversation with them very quickly and, moreover, recognised extraordinary talents immediately, for example among the eagle falconers, even though he had never flown one himself. Therefore, he recognised and appreciated qualities such as hunting skills, a hawk's recall, a proper attitude within falconry and much more.

It was Christian's special lifelong concern to have a falconers' association in each country; one in which all falconry concerns should be worked out together with the respective hunting associations. That was his biggest goal. Unfortunately, especially on this issue, he

was often not understood by his colleagues. Personally, I still agree and believe today that falconry would be much stronger if the above goal was achieved.

He also repeatedly sent expert reports for UNESCO recognition, including for the Austrian Falconry Association (ÖFB). It was never a matter of course that we can still practice falconry today because, politically speaking, falconry has been on the brink of extinction several times. Only with the help of a few enthusiasts was it possible to find compromises. One of them was Christian de Coune.

Falconry, especially in Europe, owes much to Christian de Coune. With him we have lost a really great friend and colleague.

Josef Hiebeler, Austria

Christian de Coune

It had to be the late 1980s when I first met Christian De Coune. At that time, I was an enthusiastic falconer in my late twenties involved in the defence of Spanish falconry amid difficult times for our sport in our country.

Spanish falconry was quite isolated then. The world had no internet, social networks, mobiles nor emails in those times. When reviewing some of my falconry correspondence of that time in order to refresh some information to write these lines, I noticed that most of our “falconry correspondence” was by postal mail or fax, a technological advantage of the late eighties!

That first time I met Christian was in Peñaranda de Bracamonte (Salamanca, Spain), during one of his random visits to Pepe Sánchez, President of *Asociación Española de Cetrería* (AEC, the Spanish Association of Falconry). Pepe was already well over his sixties, and Christian in his late forties. I used to act as translator as Pepe didn't speak English, while both gentlemen could understand each other with few Spanish words and a shared love for falconry and its defence.

I remember Christian's physical aspect impressed me. Tall, thin, always elegantly dressed with his parsimonious walk and talk, with a grey beard, a significant rising moustache and

heavily populated eyebrows I thought, Goodness! He looks like a 20th century Don Quixote de la Mancha, the Spanish *Hidalgo* depicted by Miguel de Cervantes four hundred years before!

In some other aspects, too, Christian was reminiscent of Don Quixote; not only physically! There has been always a kind of debate within the falconry community on whether the representatives of falconry at political level must be practising falconers or not. Christian was not a practicing falconer, as far as I know, while I knew him. I heard that he had flown some shortwings in his youth, but I never asked him; there was no need. I have met, and know, quite a few national and international falconry leaders over the last four decades, most of them passionate practising falconers, but only a few with the uncompromising commitment shown by Christian for our sport in his long career as President of IAF.

He held falconry's flag high with dignity during the worst times; time when falconers were scattered, uninformed and uncoordinated and when attacks on our sport could have easily proved fatal, particularly, but not only, in Europe. He fought our battles, most of the times alone, unassisted with no material means (often funded by his own private money). He was ready to attend any meeting at European institutions, meet with officials, write or fly to any country to support falconers in their discussions with governments or parliaments. And Christian did it, not only in a dignified and modest way, but solidly. He worked through and studied all available documentation in each case, got experts' opinions and built a sound list of arguments to defend falconry wherever it was questioned.

I recall very well his reaction when, in 1989, falconry was banned in Spain by an outrageous and unexpected decree by central government on the basis of falconry being a massive, non-selective way of hunting. Spanish falconers hurriedly assembled into a sort of a national coordinating body, uniting small clubs from all over the country in a desperate effort to push back the government decree. We kindly requested letters of support from different falconry or falconry-friendly organisations or relevant figures from all over the world. The first one we received was signed by Christian as IAF's President, well written and with solid arguments to defend Spanish falconry. He strongly supported us with advice and correct wording during the whole process (lasting years!), until falconry was again practised legally under the regulations of the Autonomous Regions.

When I became more deeply involved in IAF, I was not always in agreement with Christian on how to deal with falconry's defence on an international level in the future. However, our discussions were, of course, on strategic visions and on how to implement them to better

represent falconers in international instances. I always esteemed him as an extraordinary, honest and most respectable leader of the international falconry community.

When he left the IAF's presidency, he remained connected and supportive with a considerate low profile, but always represented a figure respected by all of us in any of the gatherings he used to attend.

Falconry, IAF and the world itself has changed a lot in the last 30 years. We, as falconers, are more professionally represented (fortunately, still leaning on the much needed falconers' voluntary work and political guidance), but I frankly believe that without Christian's work it would have been not possible to reach this point in good shape.

We falconers of the world are very much indebted to the figure of Christian De Coune, and so he should be recognised.

José Manuel Rodríguez-Villa, Spain, Chairman of the European Foundation for Falconry and Conservation (EFFC)



Left: Christian in his office. From his article 'La Cetreria en el tercer milenia' in Spanish for the Spanish Falconry Magazine. Right: President of IAF Christian de Coune and President of AEC (Spain) Jose Sanchez in Riobos in Salamanca, Spain, 1993. (From the Archives of Spanish Falconry – Adolfo Ruiz).



Coto de la Cruz

From left to right: Lorenzo Machin, Jose Sanchez, Christian de Coune, Jesus Callejo. Salamanca, 1993. (From the Archives of Spanish Falconry – Adolfo Ruiz).

Christian de Coune

I didn't know Christian de Coune well. I met him on a number of occasions in Scotland, in the company of my father. He would come to Scotland most grouse hawking seasons to stay with Patrick Morel and Gilles Nortier. In the 1980s they hawked a moor called Dorrery in Caithness, in the Northeast of Scotland, and we had a grouse moor nearby. Many very enjoyable joint hawking days were had with Gilles and Patrick, and Christian was often there. He didn't talk to us children much; I was not sure whether he had children of his own, but he didn't take much notice of us. I can remember being slightly in awe of him. He was always immaculately turned out in the sporting clothing of the gentry and his beard and moustache beautifully manicured. Being young, I didn't know about the IAF or his position in it and I was always a little puzzled why the grown-ups were so respectful of him and even why he was there. He didn't fly a hawk, and why would a grown-up be on a grouse moor in Scotland and not fly a hawk?

When Patrick and Gilles started hawking further south in Scotland, we saw much less of them and so little of Christian. As I grew up and started to fly hawks myself, I learnt of the

work he was doing with the IAF and became much more respectful of his reputation and the great work he did for falconry. Chatting to Patrick Morel I have learnt much more about his falconry and the rightful place he holds in the sport's history. I only wish I had been more aware of who he was and old enough to enjoy conversation with him at the time I was in his company.

Mark Upton, England, UK

Letter with New Year postcard from Christian de Coune to Slovenian falconer Dr Igor Tavcar of 28th December 2004.

Dear Igor,

Thank you for your message. The world has always been changing. Due to communism some countries have changed less than others. But with the end of communism some of them are catching up and start changing quite fast. Becoming a member of the EU is bound to bring even faster changes. When I remember a radius of 5 kilometres around here when I was a kid and when I compare with now, it's quite striking, but the changes came slowly. The same is in the process of happening in Slovenia, but at a much faster pace. I understand perfectly your sorrow, but there is always something positive in everything: the bottle is half full or half empty. A great difference is that now people are much more conscious of the value of landscapes, biodiversity etc. . . . But on the other hand people wish to have a bigger house, better roads and cars. The Middle Ages were certainly very picturesque, but I prefer my computer, my central heating, my car; if the Middle Ages still exist somewhere I would certainly be very happy to visit, but not to live in them.

You are right, I must visit all those countries that have not yet changed too much. Even the Planet Earth changes: see attachment.



Convey my very best wishes to your parents.

I wish you a happy New Year with all your dreams coming true.

Don't forget your stop-over at Half-Way-House Cochetay.

Best wishes,

Christian.

Dr Igor Tavcar, Slovenia.

Several precious encounters

Not even time itself has erased the memory of Christian de Coune. At a time when he was burdened by a demanding position – he was the President of the IAF – our meeting was rather formal.

In October 2005, the IAF AGM Congress was held in Prague, followed by the 38th International Meeting of Falconers in Opočno, Czech Republic. Despite my workload (as chief hunter of the whole meeting – one attended by 320 falconers, with and without hawks, from 25 countries and four continents) we were finally able to make some time for ordinary, informal and friendly conversations with this extremely warm and modest person. We discussed the past and future of falconry, spoke on the issue of illegal falconry and agreed on sanctions for it. Thanks to Mirka, we also dedicated a lot of time to the subject of women practising falconry and, especially, the joys and pitfalls of falconry marriages. We laughed a lot at the memories of our own and Christian's falconry experiences.

Another meeting took place in 2010 in Austria to celebrate 60 years of the Austrian Falconry Club and, a week later, we met in Slovakia - again an IAF meeting alongside a field meet. Mirka, Christian and I no longer had any major responsibilities here, and so we were able to just enjoy beautiful days in nature, hawking and pleasant conversation. I remember Christian expressing appreciation that Mirka and I still managed to hunt successfully. (We were amused by Lubor and Christian being practically the same age and agreed that a true falconer never stopped hawking as long as he was still breathing).

We have no doubt that if falconry is influenced by people like Christian, its future will be in good hands.

Mirka and Lubor Křivka, Czech Republic

Christian de Coune

In the last days of December 1985, returning from another expedition, I received a packet of letters which had arrived at the Georgian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Zoology in my absence. In those years colleagues traditionally congratulated each other with postcards from their holidays and the letters I received at the institute were primarily salutations from

friends. One letter, however, was from a person I did not know from Belgium, whose name I had never heard before – Christian de Coune. He reported that he had recently met colleagues from the Soviet Union, from whom he had learned that there was still hawking in Georgia; hawking with an official status, with a society of falconers and with regular meetings. This very thing interested Christian and so he asked me to tell him more about modern hawking in Georgia. I tried to answer his questions as briefly as I could and told him about the history of the society, the number of *bazieri* (falconers) in Georgia, the statutes of the society and provisions for competitions and thus, enclosing a few photos, I sent the letter. The reply from the capitalist country, as far as was possible under the conditions of the USSR Post and the control of the 1st Division of the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR (responsible for state secrets), was “immediate” – Christian’s reply reached me after about two months! Christian wrote that he was extremely interested in information about falconers in Georgia, as nothing was known about them in Europe. He also enquired about the history of Georgian falconry, the existence of material monuments and documents and publications etc. I responded whenever possible and a correspondence ensued. I introduced Christian to Givi Chogovadze – the Chairman of the Society of Hunters and Fishermen of Georgia’s falconry section – and they, too, started a lively correspondence which developed into a close friendship. It was thanks to the active cooperation of Christian de Coune that Georgian falconers gained international recognition and official status, and were admitted to IAF.

Once in one of my letters I ‘carelessly’ informed Christian about plans to hold an All-Union hawking meeting in Georgia in the autumn of 1987. He seriously intended to come and meet Georgian falconers and asked me to help him organise his visit, to send him an invitation and provide assistance. Knowing in advance that nothing would come of this idea, nevertheless, together with Givi Chogovadze and the Director of the Institute of Zoology, Academician Boris Epifanovich Kurashvili, we twice applied to the relevant offices, but we were told clearly both times that the participation of any foreigners was ruled out. This was in the spring of 1987, when *perestroika* was just beginning to gain momentum and the USSR was still a closed country. Visitors from Czechoslovakia and Hungary were also refused entry. The only foreign participant, West German falconer Ernst Luttmann, was able to attend the meeting unofficially, having bought an INTOURIST ticket to Batumi.

I first met Christian in the spring of 1990. Between 1988 and 1991 I was working in Tbilisi Zoo and, due to a zoo cooperation programme, I managed to attend a meeting of European zoos at the famous *Weltvogelpark Walsrode* in Hannover, Germany. Before my

departure, I wrote to some European colleagues whom I knew by correspondence about my trip. I also told Christian. He enquired about the route and timing of my arrival and departure to Germany and suggested I drive to Belgium. Naturally I could not accept such a venture: who would have allowed me to leave Germany for Belgium on my own? I informed Christian that I would be departing after the meeting from Düsseldorf. The day before my departure for Germany, he called me in Tbilisi and informed me that he would be in Düsseldorf and we could meet before my flight. He asked me to bring him some photos and slides about Georgian falconers and about hunting birds in the USSR in general. I was at a loss for words, and did not know what to answer, because he was a legendary man: the President of the International Association of Falconry. Christian told me that my flight from Düsseldorf was 200km and I would need less than three hours to get there, so I would be home by the evening. We met at the airport, recognising each other in the crowd. My level of English was poor, but after talking for an hour and a half, Christian did not let me feel it. This is how I managed to meet this remarkable, extraordinary, extremely sensitive person; an extremely interesting interlocutor and an intellectual in the classical sense of the word.

In the following years our correspondence continued, and I was fortunate to meet Christian several more times – in Spain, Belgium and Germany. The last meeting was in December 2010, during an international conference of birdwatchers in Gujarat, India. We stayed in the same room, went on excursions together, talked a lot, and remembered the late Givi Chogovadze. Christian complained several times that he had never managed to visit Georgia. I invited him to the Caucasus Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls in Georgia in October 2011. Alas, Christian was never able to visit Georgia. He passed away in September 2011. In my library, I still have heirlooms – several books given to me by Christian. I also have only fond memories of this kind and extremely bright man; ones I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Dr Alexander Abuladze, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Christian de Coune

My name is Geroen De Smet.

As a young lad in the early eighties, I was already committed to falconry while living in the Flemish part of Belgium. In the decades that followed, working alongside dear friends, I was passionate about many aspects of falconry, actively hunting with my birds and, later on, linking this to my profession doing pest control. While doing educational displays in wildlife parks and a historic castle, I created a cultural-historical exposition about falconry, and became involved with the captive breeding of raptors which is still a big part of my life to this day. In order to improve falconry and techniques for breeding of birds of prey in captivity, I participate in a research group related to the University of Ghent, HOGENT, and the University of Utrecht (The Netherlands). Early on in the eighties my mentor, the late Werner Huyben, often spoke dearly and with great respect about Christian de Coune. Christian de Coune was a very well known and deeply respected falconer not just in the Belgian falconry community, but also far beyond. I had the great pleasure of finally meeting him in July 2009 during the second International Festival of Falconry in the UK, and remember a very pleasant and inspiring conversation during which we spoke at length regarding the continuation and protection of present-day falconry.

Christian expressed to me his interest in the necessity for pro-actively protecting falconry, not only through the means of passing on traditions and knowledge to the next generations, and via wildlife conservation efforts, but also by having essential conversations with various government agencies. One remarkable aspect of the conversation was that he pointedly brought up the significant importance of the flying displays given by experts worldwide, for example in many wildlife parks. He viewed these professionally-presented demonstrations as a form of a buffer to protect falconry. He pointed out the perpetual political discussions between the present-day falconry communities and the 'anti' movement and feared that if these anti-lobbyists ever succeeded in banning bird of prey demonstrations, it could mean the first step towards a total ban on falconry. Any potential legal ban on such displays could, according to Christian, start a step-by-step evolution of policies towards a total ban, or at the least a very repressive policy towards falconry. Coming to the present day, specifically the Flemish part of Belgium where I live, we clearly see a seemingly paradoxical set of circumstances:

- The contents of the UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- The intentions of a politically strong 'anti' movement's propaganda expressed through their campaigns.
- A great many new laws that affect falconry.
- The decline of active falconers.



- The changes of a parallel nature happening in other regions of Europe and the rest of the world.

- Ever-increasing repressive policies towards falconry and its specialties

These six circumstances which we observe today only strengthen the words which Christian shared with me all those years ago; a visionary's point of view !

On photo: Islam Karnakbayev (Kazakhstan), Christian and Geroen De Smet (towards rear) at the second International Festival of Falconry, UK – July 2009

Geroen De Smet, Belgium

Christian de Coune – President of my Club

I met Christian in 1993 when I became a member of *Club Marie de Bourgogne*, when he was the President of the Club. I am not going to tell you what he represented or what he did for falconry: others will do that.

Christian was a true gentleman in every sense of the word!

I remember a generous and fine man, very human and humble despite his great knowledge on many subjects. I recall the IAF's Annual General Meeting in Slovakia, and a cruise to England with Kathou, always a delightful travelling companion.

Every year the barbeque for the Club at Le Cochetay was an event not to be missed. Tables on the grass in front of the house, hawks on their blocks, chatting, laughing, good food and wine! Last week saw our Club's AGM at the same venue where Christian attended his last one, and I remembered so clearly him assuring us that the cancer was not going to get him, that he was fighting. . . . Unfortunately, a few months later he left us.

His name often comes up at IAF, FACE meetings or in the corridors of institutions: we miss him.

I am glad to show some greeting cards Christian used to send. He replaced the figures of the characters with photos of Kathou and Lui and put Le Cochetay and Kathou's house in the background.



Véronique Blontrock, Brussels, Belgium

Remembering Christian de Coune

In October of 2005, I was elected VP/Americas at the IAF AGM in Opočno, Czech Republic, succeeding the late Frank Bond. Although the assembly was cordial and collegial, trying to assimilate was a bit daunting. That's when I met Christian. Recognising my dilemma, he took special pains to make sure that I was welcome and felt comfortable. Christian introduced me to many of the delegates and officers. He was a past IAF President and knew all of the people in attendance as well as the inner workings of the organisation. Social events and time in the field would find Christian talking to various people, making sure that everyone felt welcome, particularly folks that were new to the organisation. Like many good people, Christian was taken from us far too soon. A vital part of the history and culture of the IAF, he will long be remembered.

William Johnston, USA

Christian de Coune, a man of culture

When I first met with Christian de Coune, somewhere in 1988, I was busily working on my future PhD in History about medieval treatises on falconry. With such a subject, the exchange of information with actual practitioners was of paramount importance. Falconers such as Patrick Morel and Carlo Verbist introduced me to Club Marie de Bourgogne and I thus came to know Christian. We became friends and met now and then at his wonderful

place, Le Cochetay, at meetings of the Club, or abroad. Of course, Christian is best known for his lasting contribution to the protection and development of falconry in the world, his active involvement in international meetings, his role as President of the IAF and his expertise in ornithology. However, I was most impressed by Christian's great cultural curiosity and his keen feeling for historical developments. Whenever I sent him one of my texts, he made precise and useful observations, sometimes adding precious suggestions. Several times he lent me articles or volumes, and even offered me a rare book, the edition of the 13th century French translation of the Latin-Arabic treatises of Moamin and Ghatrif, published by Håkan Tjerneld in 1945. It became a key volume in my research library.

Christian was a 'frequent flyer' and travelled no less than fifteen times to India, especially to Rajasthan, his most beloved destination. He also flew several times to the Arabic Gulf and to the United States where he had good contacts. He visited all European countries and even drove to Byalorussia (now Belarus) in 2010. I was particularly impressed by his special collection of dictionaries that he was proud to show at his home. As he explained to me, whenever he travelled to a new destination he bought a local dictionary in order to be able to exchange a few sentences with the local people, and to understand some basic vocabulary. He considered this as an expression of respect towards his local hosts. Furthermore, he explored the history, architecture and iconography of the countries he got to know, and his echoes of distant lands were precise and stimulating. One cannot but admire these signs of cultural openness and intellectual discipline.

At times, Christian cultivated wit and paradox. The self-made Christmas and New Year cards he elaborated with Kathleen Donck were a delight and I cannot resist reproducing one of them, for the year 2009, where they pop up as the protagonists of a famous late medieval tapestry preserved at the Parisian Musée de Cluny, *L'offrande du coeur*.



The gallant nobleman's head has been replaced by a cheerful Christian, whereas the lady with the sparrowhawk has Kathleen's profile. In the back one recognises Le Cochetay (right)

and Kathleen's elegant home at Overijse (left). The Cluny tapestry was probably woven at Arras in the North of France, during the second quarter of the 15th century, and it conveys an exquisite symbolism: the man is offering his heart to the lady, provoking the vivid glance of the woman's sparrowhawk, which signifies her acceptance. This recreated picture adequately conveys Christian's profound sensibility to the cultural heritage of falconry, his independent spirit, his humorous attitude and his creativity.

Baudouin Van den Abeele, Belgium

A simple man and a good friend - Christian de Coune

Introduction

Christian de Coune and I, Darius Daugela, were brought together through a common life path called falconry. Today I cannot say to whom I should be more grateful – fate or God – that I managed to meet him and communicate with him not only as a legendary President of IAF, but also, first and foremost, as an unassuming man and a good friend.

Today, sitting at the table with a blank sheet of paper, on which I'm trying to recount my memories of those good old times with Christian, I thought that I shouldn't describe everything chronologically in case readers get bored and fall asleep reading what's written. I'll just try to remember the moments that I think might interest those who will read what I've written.

Getting to know each other and meeting each other for the first time

I think that the beginnings of my getting to know Christian were quite long and, dare I say it, very unconventional.

Even in my early school years I was interested in birds, which later led me to becoming a member of the Lithuanian Ornithological Society. After graduating from the Lithuanian Academy of Agriculture as a forestry engineer, specialising in hunting, in the early 1990s, I began to take interest in hunting with birds of prey, which was still called 'falconry' although this was a seldom-used term in our country.

This interest had its limitations – in Lithuania there was no information or literature about this form of hunting, and nor were there any real falconers from whom I could receive lessons and practical advice.

At that time, the few academic-delivered lectures about hunting methods that related to falconry took only three to five minutes, including barely more than the information that you can not only hunt with firearms, but also with birds of prey after they have been tamed. That was the sum total of knowledge about falconry that a student of the Academy who had graduated as a hunter could receive.

I graduated from the Academy in 1993. The idea of taking up falconry never left me for a moment but, at that time, the prospects of obtaining either literature or contacts with practising falconers remained zero.

In the summer of that year, having received the address of the CIC, I took a blank sheet of paper and wrote a letter asking for information about the possibility of obtaining literature and finding a school for falconers, then waited impatiently for the answer. At first I checked my mailbox almost every day, but there was no answer. My expectations faded into oblivion, until . . . on 1st February 1994 I received a reply from Heinz Pils, President of CIC's Working Group for Falconry and Birds of Prey Conservation. The envelope contained a congratulatory leaflet about my interest in falconry, several pages of brochures about the sport's general concepts and a couple of pages of addresses for falconry clubs all over the world in very small print. Amongst these addresses I found that for an organisation called the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, under which the name of Christian de Coune was listed. At that time, knowing nothing, I had never heard of such an organisation.

Without expecting anything, I took a typewriter and typed out letters to falconers' clubs all over the world. I also sent one to IAF. All the letters had the same contents, stating that I was from Lithuania, was interested in trained hawks and that I would like to restore falconry to Lithuania etc. I asked the clubs to share information about training hawks and about hawking in the field, and also invited members to come to Lithuania for hawking and to devise beginner's falconry courses together.

I prepared and sent about 20 letters to various addressees in different countries. I don't know if all the letters reached their addressees but received only one answer, to my happiness and surprise – a letter from Christian de Coune. In this, without any eloquence or showing

off, the author asked a number of questions in order to get a general idea about Lithuania and information related to falconry. The questions asked by Christian were as follows:

- about the legality of falconry in Lithuania;
- about conservation of birds of prey in Lithuania and the possibility of keeping and using them;
- about CITES in Lithuania;
- how other hunting institutions considered falconry and how local society saw it;
- what small birds or other quarry may be hunted in Lithuania.

Christian explained that he asked these questions to understand whether falconers from abroad could come to Lithuania to hunt with hawks. He also explained, with regard to instructional literature, that whilst there were many books about falconry in the world, these alone are not enough to really understand falconry.

At the end of his letter, Christian mentioned that he was coming to Grodno (Hrodno in Belarusian), Belarus, on business in late August of that year and planned to spend some time there. He suggested I come and meet him in person.

At the end of August 1994 I did not hesitate long, but bought a train ticket to Belarus. I remember that I had to wait in the hotel's reception hall since, at that time, there was no mobile network either in Belarus or here, so there was no way to call or text "I'm here and waiting for you."

After a short wait, three men, all dressed in field clothes, appeared at the hotel door. The leading man had an impressive appearance: white curly hair, a white beard, black eyebrows and kindly-looking blue eyes. This initial impression has been imprinted on me for a lifetime. As you will realise, it was Christian de Coune. Walking in with him were his friend and fellow traveller Georges Wilket and Alexandre Vintchevski. They had just returned from the field or the forest.

Christian proposed that we had lunch together and, during and after this, our whole conversation revolved around falconry and my country. I think he was interested in everything related to our mutual passion. After all, at that time Lithuania was still a blank spot on the world map of falconry and a young man who was interested by and invested in it had just turned up.

I remember that Christian returned to the topics we had corresponded about. He also told me that I should go somewhere in Europe to falconers' meetings to see and to learn how it is done in practice; how to hunt. The evening came on all too quickly. My new friends suggested I should stay, so that we could spend the night and the next day together. Unfortunately, I had other plans at the time: I had a return ticket in my pocket and by midnight I was already back in Lithuania.

During that initial meeting I learned from Alexandre that Christian came from a noble family. I also learned that he was passionately interested in plants and trees. Talking about this, he could not only name species (both in his native language and Latin) but also their genera, families, etc. It was not without some truth that Alexandre half-jokingly and half-seriously called him the walking encyclopaedia of botany and dendrology. On the basis of my experience over future meetings, conversations and the time I was lucky enough to spend with him, I can only confirm that he could rightly bear the title of a true 'encyclopaedia'.

I also learned, incidentally, about Christian's view of the illegal trade in smuggled birds. Alexandre said "can you imagine? I once asked Christian what he would do if he was offered an illegally caught falcon from the Russian Far East for sale. Christian replied that he would have turned the man over to the police straight away."

I think this fact once again confirms how honest, unselfish and loyal to falconry the man was. That was my first face-to-face meeting with him.

What happened next...

When I came back after the meeting in Grodno, unexpected but pleasant surprises awaited me at home. A month after my return I received a letter from the famous Dutch falconer Jacques van Gerven. With the letter came a small parcel – bells, swivel, leash and jesses. The letter informed me that Jacques made various items of falconry furniture and, if I cared to, I might be able to order from him in the future. In addition, there was no need to worry about the contents in the parcel: everything was paid for by Christian de Coune.

A few days later I got another surprise. I received Philip Glasier's book *Falconry and Hawking* from England. On opening the book I found the vendor's card with a short note "From Christian de Coune, Belgium."

However, the surprises didn't end there. Some time later I received a VHS video cassette with the film *Understanding Falconry* by Jemima Parry-Jones. That, too, was the work of

Christian. At that time, all this material I received was very valuable informative help for me as a young falconer and also for my friends who were just starting out in falconry.

During that period of surprises I received several more letters from other falconers. One of them was from Eckart Schormair, at that time President of the DFO (*Deutscher Falkenorden*), with an invitation to travel to Germany in the autumn to an International Falconers' Meeting in Sögel. This meeting took place at the end of October 1994, and I met up with Christian again. During this convention, there was also the IAF's Annual General Meeting. On the morning of the meeting Christian found me and said: "Darius, I know that Lithuania is not an IAF member yet, but as the IAF President I invite you as a representative of your country to attend this meeting." Alexandre Vintchevski was also at this meeting. I don't remember exactly what issues were discussed, but only remember that Christian gave me the floor and that I briefly introduced myself, thus letting the IAF members know that there were falconers in Lithuania.

After this meeting our communication remained uninterrupted. I wrote letters to Christian with various questions about falconry which interested me, and he answered them. I kept receiving new issues of IAF Newsletters from him too. I can't say for sure but, judging by the envelopes, I got them personally from Christian.

At my place...

Christian visited Lithuania, and therefore me, a couple of times, in the summers of 1997 and 2000. The first time, I met him in the capital, Vilnius, when he was returning from Belarus to Belgium. He was travelling with his friend Georges: Georges at the wheel and Christian next to him in the navigator's seat. I remember once it came out of the conversation that I asked how often they swapped who was driving. Christian then said that he didn't like to drive whilst his friend loved taking the steering wheel, but that both shared a common love of travelling. Thus, their crew always had a constant pilot and a constant navigator. Indeed, from that point on, as often as I travelled together with Christian, I never saw him at the wheel.

As our capital is not far from Belarus and my home is in Samogitia, which is in the north-western part of the country, almost on the border with Latvia, we had a four-hour trip. On the way to my place, we passed the Open-air Museum of Lithuania (*Lietuvos liaudies buities muziejus*). I asked the guests if they would like to stop and visit the place, and they agreed. This museum is a village, where there are houses and farmsteads, fully decorated and

furnished from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century, from all ethno-cultural regions of Lithuania, located on an area of 195 hectares.

We walked around the farmsteads, scrutinising everything. At every manor house, just as in the old times, there were gardens with flower beds. This way women and young girls decorated the places in which they lived. Approaching one of these flowerbeds, I was pointing out one of the flowers which were blooming at that time to Christian, telling him that this species had been growing here since ancient times and it was an old local species. However, Christian told me “no, it can't be an indigenous species.” It was one of the *Cosmos* genus, from the *Aster* family, and he had encountered it in his travels in South Africa where he saw flowering meadows with this species. Its origins are North and South America and it arrived in Africa during the Anglo-Boer War as a source of horse fodder. That's how much information I got just from talking about one flower.

We then went into a house in which there was a spinning wheel, among various household tools, on which in the olden days women used to spin various materials (from linen to sheep's wool) by hand. I remember, as a child, that I was lucky to see my grandmother spinning with this tool. Christian pointed at the spinning wheel and told me that it reminded him of his mother. In 1944, when the Americans liberated Belgium from the Nazis, the soldiers happened to enter Christian's parents' house. His mother was just at that moment sitting at a spinning wheel spinning yarn. The soldiers who entered froze and watched what she was doing in spellbound silence, looking at the process but not really understanding the point. As Christian explained later, the soldiers had never seen hand spinning before.

The Belgian visitors stayed with my parents.

On one day, we drove to a reserve in northern Lithuania comprising about 4,000 hectares, of which 3/4 is marsh and the rest is surrounding forest. With more than 120 small lakes in the bog, the site is a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. At the time, I was just working as a ranger (Chief Nature Conservation Officer) in the reserve. We walked around the bog, reaching the most beautiful little lakes in its centre. During this tour of the bog, Christian once again confirmed that he was a treasure trove of botanical knowledge, a walking encyclopaedia of botany and more. During our excursion, the local forest orchids, which are very rare in Lithuania and are listed in the Red Book, were blooming in the forests and bogs. After showing this beauty to the guests, Christian named

the orchid in English and Latin. On the moor I was able to show them a biotope they had not seen in Belgium, but could only see if they travelled far north into the tundra.

The next day we drove towards the sea. We wanted to reach Klaipeda, a seaport on the Baltic, by ferry across the Curonian Bay to the Curonian Spit, a strip of land stretching from southwest to northeast for 100km. The northern part of the spit belongs to Lithuania, and the southern half to Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast (before World War II it was in East Prussia). We wanted to go to a spa town on the spit, Nida, located about 60 kilometres from the ferry terminus. After this, we planned to return to Klaipeda and drive to Palanga (the biggest Lithuanian resort town on the Baltic coast) in order to visit the former palace of the Counts of Tiškevičiai, where the famous Amber Museum is located, which displays amber boulders of more than 3.5kg, and various unique amber articles.

There were five of us travelling that day – Christian, his friend and my family. It was a very hot day. I remember at one point Georges opened the boot of the car and there was a car microfridge in it. I half-jokingly told him “you guys are serious – you know where to keep the beer in the car on a hot day”. He answered “no, we do not carry beer, we carry milk here.” I asked him what he meant by that. He explained that he likes coffee and milk. When they went to Belarus for the first time, they found the local milk especially to their taste and therefore bought a stock of it for the future. After that trip, they always took Belgian or Belarusian milk with them on their road trips. Yes, speaking of coffee and milk, they tasted Lithuanian milk at my place. They liked it, and left the bottled Belgian milk in the fridge unopened.

That day, since there was some event in Klaipeda and a lot of people took the ferry to the Curonian Spit, we had to spend much more time waiting for the crossing than we had planned before our departure. Halfway up, we climbed a dune called *Naglio kopa* in Lithuanian (Nagli's Dune). From this we could admire a unique landscape – a long but thin tongue of land, *i.e.* the Curonian Spit between two seas (the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon). Going down the dune, I told Christian that because of time lost on the ferry crossing we might not make it to the Amber Museum. We had to decide whether to go further along the spit or to go back. The guests chose the Museum of Amber.

It should be noted that Christian quickly found a common language with my son, who was four years old at the time. Although my son only spoke Lithuanian, and Christian, whilst knowing many languages, did not, they still managed to talk. Christian spoke to my son in a

‘universal language’ that is instinctively known by every adult who knows how to communicate with children. Coming down the dune my son and Christian raced to see who was the fastest. Of course, it was an adult mind that won the race.

In Palanga we made it to the Amber Museum and, after our visit, went for a walk in the park where the palace was located. Here, Christian once again demonstrated his knowledge of botany, but this time dendrology. Before leaving for home we walked to the shorefront to the famous Palanga Sea bridge, an L-shaped pier extending into the sea.

The next day we continued driving around other places in Samogitia, visiting some beautiful sites of natural splendour. After that, the next morning Christian left for Belgium with plans to stay in Poland’s Masuria region.

During his stay my mother made *cepelinai* (“zeppelins”) for one meal. One of our national dishes, these are dumplings of grated raw potatoes with a filling of very small chopped pieces of meat, shaped like the eponymous airships. I served the zeppelins with a gravy made of sour cream, browned lard and dried boletus mushrooms. My father suggested that, to accompany this meal, Christian should try the local Samogitian whisky, which many people also call moonshine, made from rye. In so doing he warned me that the drink’s strength of the drink was somewhere around 55%. I thought Christian would refuse . . . but I was wrong. He tasted it.

After dinner, mum took all the dishes from the table and put them in the sink, where the dishes were washed, while she started making some tea and coffee. At some point, Christian got up from his chair, went to the sink to wash his hands, or to leave something there . . . and started to wash the dishes. Mum asked me to tell Christian that he didn't need to do that. Christian delicately replied that he was no different from any other mere mortal and would finish the dishes himself. This moment will probably stay in my memory forever as an indication of what a modest man Christian was. I knew that he was a nobleman from another country – he was our guest – and here he was, just like he was at home, doing the dishes.

After the guests left, my father told me something. After we had returned from the moor excursion, in the evening everyone went to their rooms to rest and sleep. At night my father awoke and got up at about three o'clock for a smoke. Seeing a light in the room where Christian was, he assumed that his guest was asleep and had simply forgotten to turn off the light. Quietly he opened the door and saw Christian sitting and reading a book instead of sleeping after a long hard day.

Three years later, again in the summer, Christian visited me once more. He and Georges were travelling together in the Baltic States. I can't remember the exact route, but they came to us from Latvia. I met him at home at the time, and he stayed at my place.

The next day I suggested we go to the Ventė Cape (in Lithuanian *Ventės ragas*), where there is an ornithological station for ringing birds including one of the biggest bird traps in Lithuania, 25m high and 5m wide. Bird ringing is undertaken all year round here, with from 50,000 to 80,000 birds rung every year. Christian and his friend Georges were very impressed with the Ventė Cape together with the ringing station.

At the station I met my old friends, who offered to take us across the Curonian Lagoon to the Curonian Spit in Nida. We thus had a rare opportunity to do this, and to carry out a plan that was not realised three years ago. Christian offered my friends money for renting a boat, but they refused. Eventually Christian insisted that he would at least pay for the fuel.



Christian, Darius with his son Marius and Georges, Curonian Spit. (Darius Daugela).

The weather was perfect again. We crossed the lagoon by boat and then explored the resort town of Nida and the unique landscape before having lunch at one of the local restaurants overlooking the sea. Of course, the meal included a tasting of local dishes with freshly caught and smoked eel and bream and Lithuanian beer.

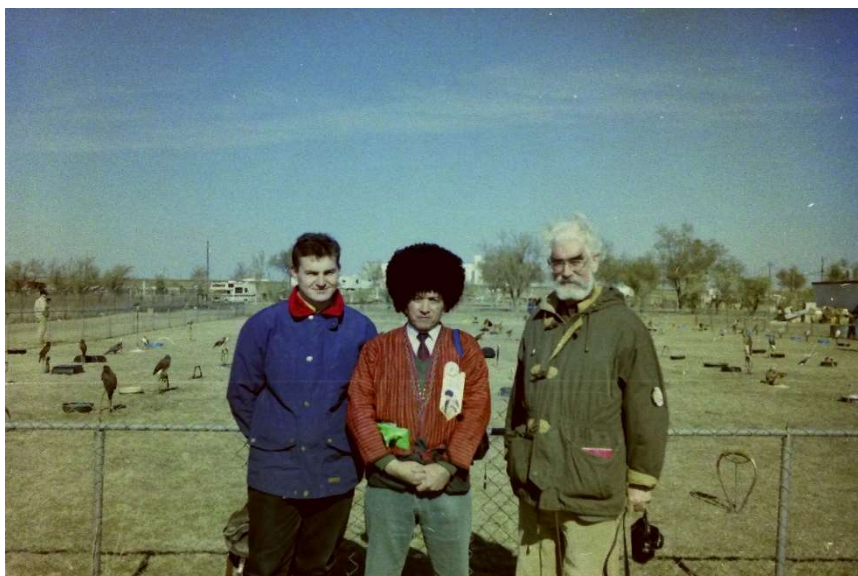
During our second meeting, Christian became very interested in a species of tree growing in our region, *i.e.* in Samogitia. It is a brittle willow (*Salix fragilis* 'Bullata'), the shape of which resembles a ball or mushroom. Its flat-topped spherical crown grows larger and larger each year. Groups of such growing willows create an unforgettable picture for all those who are not indifferent to the charms of trees and wildlife.

More than once I had heard Christian say how much he loved these willows and that he had never seen such a tree anywhere in the wild. Georges once told me that Christian had a collection of different kinds of plants and trees which he had brought back from his trips to various countries. According to Georges, this collection was quite substantial.

Before I left, when I was saying goodbye to Christian, he shook my hand and told me that the doors of his home were always open to me; that I was ever-welcome. It was our last meeting in Lithuania.



From left to right: Darius (Lithuania), Christian and Jevgeni Shergalin (Estonia) during the IAF AGM in Hungary, October 1999. (Darius Daugela).



From left to right: Darius, Atadurdy Eyeberdiyev (Turkmenistan) and Christian in front of weathering yard during IAF AGM, organised by NAFA in Amarillo, Texas, USA, November 2000. (Darius Daugela).



On trip near Amarillo, Texas, during IAF AGM, November 2000. (Darius Daugela).

I never got a chance to visit Christian in my lifetime, but with greetings from Lithuania I added to his collection of plants I brought back from my travels. That was in 2004 when the IAF Annual General Meeting and International Falconers' Meeting was held at Opočno in the Czech Republic. Before leaving home I remembered that Christian had admired the balloon-shaped willows we had. I found one such small tree, carefully dug it up, packed it carefully, and put it in the car to take it safely to the Czech Republic. When I met Christian there, I gave him my gift. Words can't describe how happy he was when it was given to him. He told many of our friends about this meeting, saying that Darius brought him a tree from Lithuania.

In Opočno, on the last day of the gathering, there was a mass held in the church especially for the falconers. Both Christian and I took part in this mass. Afterwards, we said goodbye and I went home. Of course, that was not the end of our connection. We kept in touch and met at various falconers' meetings.

Instead of postscript.

I can't remember the exact time when we had this conversation (it was either at our first or second meeting in Lithuania), but we started talking about cars, the border and customs. Christian told us that they had been stopped by customs officers at the border when entering Belarus, driving the new Renault car that Christian had bought. The officers examined their

passports, then the documents for the car. Everything was in order. Next, they started to inspect the car and, again, everything was in order. However, the customs officials were in no hurry to let them go, and one of the officers said: “please show me the Renault's engine number.” Together with his travelling companion, Christian searched for and found this number under the bonnet and showed it to the officer, who promptly then asked to see the car body number. The foreign guests unpacked the whole car, searched the whole boot . . . but there was no number and that was it – and time was running out. Suddenly an idea hit them and they called the Belgian Renault dealership from which they bought the car. The agent told them that the number plate was somewhere on the bottom of the car body, under the spare wheel.

Christian went on to tell us “We were delighted to find this number and gleefully called the customs officer over. He came up to the car, looked at the number from afar and, giving us his documents, wished us a safe journey.” I then asked Christian if it hadn't been clear to him that for handing over a few dollars in cash they could have continued without such an intensive inspection and without detriment to their time or nerves. Christian replied that he understood everything as soon as the document check started, but he had never bribed anyone before, and this case should not have been an exception.

Darius Daugela, President of the Lithuanian Falconers' Club

The high voice of conscience...

“The first time you see him, you know him; the second time you see him, he's a relative.” This is our people's maxim; the national formula for the love of friendship, unity and cohesion. I was lucky to meet and talk (through an interpreter) with Christian de Coune only twice, but even that was enough to imbue me with a great sense of esteem and respect for him. Soon after I became acquainted with printed materials about him, I realised the genuine magnitude of his personality – he was a tireless fighter for falconry's best ideals and a true defender of the falconry community's public interests.

Throughout his life, Christian represented for us a model of extraordinary integrity with his deeply held principles. His was a high voice of conscience, embodying sincere concern for the revival, preservation and purity of the folk tradition of protection of birds of prey and the practice of falconry. He will always be a shining example of selfless service to the wise, righteous and humane heritage of our ancestors, and it is our moral duty not only to our comrade's memory, but also to the people and society, to follow such a way of life.

Ata Eyeberdiyev, President of National Society of Falconers of Turkmenistan.

About Christian

I first met Christian at an International Field Meet in Ameland, Holland in the early 1990s when I was President of the Irish Hawking Club.

A perfect gentleman, he was totally dedicated to defending the art of falconry from the various anti falconry groups across Europe and, indeed, across the world. His knowledge of the law, both domestically and internationally, was most useful in defending our rights.

I only met Christian at IAF Annual General Meetings about five times but always enjoyed his company.

Paul Fogarty, Republic of Ireland.

My friend Christian

Many words come to mind to describe my friend Christian.

I met Christian in 1977 when I got off a plane in India at Jodhpur. Very **handsome**, he carried a leather bag and a camera tripod, and I accosted him understanding by his accent that he spoke French. We immediately connected, and he was endowed with a very **open mind**. We decided to go north to see a camel fair and continue to Bikaner where we were received by the Maharaja who was also a falconer. Back in Jodhpur we had decided to have tea on the

terrace of a good restaurant; seeing slices of lemon on a table, Christian got the idea (absurd and full of **naivety**) of ordering a lemon tea; since the waiter replied that they did not have any, with infinite **patience** he tried several times to explain his wish to the poor man who, nonetheless, still did not understand. He was saved only by the arrival of the boss who had the unimaginable drink explained to him by a group of Indian students (and, with infinite **politeness**, he thanked them). The next day we were to go our separate ways but he realised that I might be a little short of money and quite naturally he offered to lend me a substantial sum. **Confidence** and **generosity** were among his many values.

Back in France we kept in touch and he introduced me to his best friend Georges Wilket whom I received at my home with some Filipino friends. Subsequently, thanks to Christian's very **welcoming nature**, I was received many times in his family home where I had the chance to meet his father which helped me to understand from whence where he derived his many qualities. He also visited me several times on the French Riviera: stays in the Mercantour National Park to see chamois and ibex; the Camargue Regional Park where we saw, amongst other things, pink flamingos (*Flamant rose* in French). One day, hearing these birds, which sounded so discordant, he said: "I understand why we call them *Flamand!*" With his characteristic and legendary sense of **humour**, he was making a pun about the Dutch-speaking Flamands (Flemish). Nevertheless, he spoke this language very well, despite this light-hearted jest and whilst not really enjoying its sound. He spoke several languages and was **highly cultured**.

Christian and Georges remained friends until the end, making many trips together; **loyalty in friendship** was also a very strong character trait. In 2001, with my wife's illness leading her very quickly to an inescapable end, they diverted from their planned trip to Belarus and came, with infinite **kindness** and **gentleness**, to see her one last time in Lyon on her hospital bed. A little later, **love** and **compassion** prompted Christian to invite me to stay with him for a while.

This incorrigible celibate ended up meeting his soulmate in the person of Kathou. I saw them several times afterwards and I would like to thank her here for all the love she was able to offer him and that they shared until his departure, which was very long and painful.

Christian was, is and will remain a person who has been an extremely important fellow traveller over the course of my life.

Cyrille Roux, France

Christian de Coune

What I can say about Christian is that he was a true gentleman and immensely helpful every time I corresponded with him. Together with Anthony Crosswell, they were the persons who encouraged and pushed us to join the falconry world and of course the IAF, something that I will never regret. It was mainly because of them that falconry is recognised in Malta nowadays.

Lawrence Formosa, Malta

My first meeting with Christian de Coune



Christian with his friend's falcon. (Dr Alexander Sorokin).

In 1985, I was a participant in the CIC's International Congress of Game Studies in Brussels, where I was to present a paper on 'The Present State of Falconry in the Soviet Union.' By that time I was quite an experienced ornithologist, having carried out field research in

different parts of the country, and birds of prey were one of my main priorities. Naturally, while working in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the Caucasus, I found myself overwhelmed by the rich hawking traditions which still exist in these regions. Furthermore, as a new wave of falconers appeared in Moscow and other places, they tried to create informal associations and I tried to help them in doing so. In this regard, a trip to Brussels was a rare opportunity in those years to communicate with Western falconers and to make friends.

On the opening day of the congress, I tried at the registration desk to get information about local falconers in order to establish contacts with them. The polite lady at the desk could not understand my absolutely terrible English for a long time, but after active gesticulations, representing the flight of a falcon and its attacks, she smiled, shook her head and wrote on a piece of paper the number of secretary of the ‘appropriate club.’ My joy was boundless, but it quickly waned as it turned out to be the phone number of the Folk Dance Club. The lady was probably confused by the similarity in my interpretation of the words ‘falconry’ and ‘folklore’ as well as my bodily movements!

I kept trying among real hunters and, eventually, an elderly gentleman gave me the phone number of “the one you want.” It turned out to be Christian de Coune! He arrived immediately and we arranged our meetings with the Congress schedule in mind.

The next morning Christian arrived and said he could be at my disposal all day. To begin with he took me on a tour of Brussels' highlights and then, during a long lunch, I told him about falconry in my country, showed him pictures of Kazakh *berkutchi*, Kyrgyz *munushkars*, Georgian *bazieri* and young falconers in Moscow. He was keenly interested in everything, from details of culturally specific equipment and training of hawks to legal questions on their acquisition, maintenance and use for hunting. He was very interested in the state of wild populations of birds of prey and threats to them. Christian, in his turn, told me about the situation of falconry in the West.

After lunch he suggested visiting a friend who lived near Brussels to see his falcons. He asked me not to tell anybody about this place as there was a very dangerous group of extreme environmentalists in Brussels, fierce opponents of falconry and of generally keeping birds of prey in captivity. They would go to any lengths, even criminal actions, to achieve their goals. This was a real shock for me because, at that time, we in the Soviet Union knew practically nothing about such groups of ‘green’ extremists.

Christian’s friend’s farmstead was fenced with a high wall of green ivy. It turned out that the friend was not at home, but Christian had a key that he used to open the gate and we

drove inside. In the courtyard, several falcons sat perched, resplendent in falconry furniture, on neatly manicured lawns. Christian sat down by one of the falcons and took it on his fist, giving me an opportunity to take a picture. This is how I got these wonderful, and I would say atypical, shots of Christian with a hawk on his fist – he was usually pictured with falconers but without a hawk himself.

As the day progressed, we drove to visit another of his friends who invited us hawking with his saker. As is often the case in such circumstances, the hawking was not successful in terms of quarry being taken, but made a terrific impression on me, which was enhanced by a wonderful dinner at the falconer's house. The fellowship, backed up by a wonderful red wine, saw midnight slip past unnoticed.

After this, Christian and I had many meetings in different countries at various conferences, congresses and symposia, but this first meeting with an amazing man is still remembered with particular warmth.

Dr Alexander Sorokin, Moscow, Russia.

Impressions of Christian de Coune

I do not know who suggested the double name for the reputable international organisation and its lavish magazine: Falconry and Birds of Prey Conservation. However, it is one which in my opinion very accurately characterises Christian de Coune's activities. I am not a falconer and not a particular fan of falconry but when de Coune spoke at international conferences I always listened to him most attentively. Once he suggested emphatically that falconers should be allowed to take a few peregrine falcons from the wild, at least a dozen birds for all Europe, and grateful falconers would help to save hundreds of falcons from poachers. There was something to discuss.

Dr Vladimir Galushin, ex-President of the Russian Bird Conservation Union, Honourable Chairman of Working Group on Birds of Prey of Northern Eurasia, Professor of Moscow State Pedagogical University and Academician of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, Moscow, Russia.

On Christian de Coune

My relatively few meetings and contacts with Christian de Coune are obviously not enough for any coherent memories of him. The first time I met him was in 1992 at a meeting on birds of prey in Berlin. It was impossible not to notice this man – a kind of aristocratic version of Don Quixote. To my surprise he came up to me and spoke to me in good German. Having learnt that I – then a CIS citizen – was going to move to Germany with my family in two months, he asked me what I would like to do after my move. I answered that my dream would be to continue studying large falcons. A day or two later he approached me again and offered to introduce me to Dr Robert Kenward, an English ornithologist who was looking for a partner for a project to study Asian saker populations. I naturally agreed, and the result of this offer was a three-year collaboration with the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology in Dorset in the UK, where Dr Kenward was working. Thanks to Christian I was thus given the opportunity to travel to my native Kazakhstan for another three years to undertake research into my beloved sakers. After this crucial first meeting for me with de Coune, I had the opportunity to see him two or three more times at large hawking meets in various European countries. Each time we greeted each other warmly and exchanged a few words, but our communication was limited to that. I regret that I did not get to know this wonderful man of great spirit and so cannot help further.

Ralph Pffefer, Kazakhstan / Germany

Christian – our dear and honourable guest

The Hungarian Falconers Club joined the IAF during Christian's presidency. In the 1980s, the atmosphere in Hungary became more open, thanks to the political changes. Contacts between international civic associations could be established. We searched for connections with foreign falconers and quickly found Christian de Coune, who was committed to expanding the IAF. I met him personally at the International Falconry Meeting in Hódmezővásárhely, 1988. He was undoubtedly striking in appearance, but his pleasant, gentlemanly personality immediately made him friendly to everyone. He visited Hungary several times and, fortunately, I was able to host him in our home once.

His most memorable visit was in February 2005 at the Saker Falcon Conference in Csákvár. Hungarian falconers have always had a good relationship with the various groups dedicated to the conservation of birds of prey, especially the Hungarian Ornithological Society's bird of prey department, so we regularly took part in events organised by them. Christian also found the news about the saker's protection exciting because he was interested in this species as a widely used trained hawk. He used these opportunities to strengthen his relationships with bird of prey conservation organisations; relationships which were much needed for falconry's wider benefit.

The Saker Conference in Csákvár took place in a foundation education complex converted from an old mill building. It was built quite far from the settlement, accessible by dirt road. When we talked to Christian about his trip by phone, I offered to take him to the venue from the airport by car, but he refused. He certainly didn't want to cause me any inconvenience, so he claimed that he would get there perfectly well by public transport. Neither I nor he perhaps fully realised just how far the education centre was from the town, more especially from the nearest bus stop.

This February was unusually cold, everything still covered by snow, so public transportation wasn't the most convenient way to travel. I arrived in Csákvár by car on the morning of the meeting. GPS wasn't even in our dreams back then so, as usual, I asked for directions from people waiting at the bus stop. An elderly lady even showed me the direction, adding that a strange bearded gentleman had also just asked her this: she pointed to a dark spot moving in the middle of the snow field. On the snowy dirty road approaching the venue, I reached the pedestrian who, in half-shoes, pulling a roller suitcase on the trampled snow, was walking towards the distant building. It was Christian. I stopped beside him, but he politely demurred even when I offered to take him the rest of the way. He said he enjoyed walking and that, in any case, it was very pleasant to exercise this morning. Finally, we arrived at the conference together, where he captivated everyone with his polite attentiveness and foresight.



Development of a European Action Plan for the Saker Falcon Conservation Programme, Csákvár, Hungary.

At the initiative of Hungarian Ornithological Association, the Nature Conservation Office and the European Office of BirdLife in Csákvár, by the invitation of the Pro-Vértés Nature Conservation Public Foundation, from 11th to 13th February 2005 we developed a European action plan for conservation of the saker. A total of 36 people from 13 countries (Hungary, Croatia, Turkey, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Russia, Georgia, England, Romania, Ukraine, Serbia and Montenegro) participated in the workshop.

Tóth János, Hungary



Christian as a guest of János Tóth and his wife Annamária at their house in Balatonalmádi, Hungary, after participation in the 6th World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls, May 2003, Budapest, Hungary. (János Tóth).



Christian and János Tóth at the latter's home in Balatonalmádi, Hungary. May 2003. (János Tóth).

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THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FALCONRY
AND CONSERVATION OF BIRDS OF PREY

President
Christian de Coune
"Le Cochetay"
B-4140 Gomzé-Andoumont
Belgium
Tel: 041/68.73.69

Mr Bogyai Frigyes
H-1028 BUDAPEST
Dér u 19
Hongrie

Le Cochetay, 8 août 1991

Dear Sir,

my friend Istvan Lakos has written me that you currently replace our dear friend Istvan Bechtold.

I must say that I have been very sorry to learn the death of Istvan. He was a great man, his death is a great loss for everybody.

I would be grateful to you to tell me with whom I will have to correspond in the future.

I am writing to you in English but I am ready to write in French or in German. I used to correspond in German with Istvan.

I enclose a circular that I send to all the members of the IAF as well as to other falconry associations which are not member.

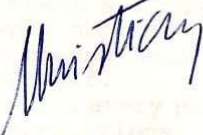
I sent the same to Istvan Lakos and to Duhay Gabor. I am not sure of the address of Duhay because once my letter has been sent back to me.

I would be grateful if the Hungarian falconers accept to help the falconers of Denmark.

If there are other organisations that would be ready to help us, they would be welcome.

Looking forward to hearing from you, I remain

yours faithfully,



Christian de Coune.

Unice

Mr. de Coune !

Bognai Földes Al
levele

QUESTIONNAIRE
YEAR: 1991.

Name of your Club: M.M.E. SOLYMÁSZ SZAKOSZTÁLY (H.O.S. HUNGARIAN
FALCONERS CLUB)

Number of members: 96...

Number of members practising falconry: c.c. 65

Number of birds used only for hawking:

- Long wings : 15...
- Short wings : 50...

Number of birds used only for captive breeding:

- Long wings : 18...
- Short wings : 9...

Number of birds produced this year in captivity:

- only in your Club: 11
- outside your Club: 2

Number of birds lost or dead last year (excluding captive
breeding mortality): 12...

Number of birds taken from the wild in your country this year,
per species: - Acc.gentilis : 7
- Acc.nisus : 3

Is taking birds from the wild for falconry allowed? Yes

Are there other falconry clubs in your country? No
how many: ...
how many members in each: ...

Are there problems in your country, e.g. new legislation, attacks
against falconry, etc.? No

Have there been any cases of illegally taking of birds of prey
from the wild or illegal traffic in birds of prey, which have
been officially established in the last four years?

One case (F. cherrug juv. 4.)

Please kindly fill in this form and send it back to:

Christian de Coune
"Le Cochetay"
B-4140 Gozré-Andoumont

Budapest, 20.12.1991.

Sincerely yours: János Juhász
(secretary)



Christian de Coune
IAF President
"Le Cochetay"
B-4140 Couze'-Andoumont

T/71/12/91.

Sehr geehrter Herr de Coune!

Ich schicke das "Questionnaire" für Ihnen zurück.

Leider habe ich das Anmeldeung und "Questionnaire"
auf dem "General Meeting 1991" sehr spät bekommen.

Ich wünsche eine Klärung von Ihnen bitten:

- eine Zusammenfassung von "General Meeting 1991",

- eine Liste von Falconerorganisationen IAF
(Namen, Adressen; Präsident, Sekretär).

Ich werde die Antwort von Ihnen sehr warten.

Für die Information möchte's ich vielen Dank
sagen!

Mit herzlichsten

Budapest, 29. Dezember 1991.

Grüßl:

Gabor Duhay

Memory of a good friend

Respectable colleagues, dear friends,

With great sorrow in my heart I write these lines. Literally hours ago I received the sad news about the death of a dear friend to a great number of people amongst the falconry community and personally to me as well. Christian de Coune has passed away.

For those of you who did not know Christian, I will relate that he was a man with a great heart. With a selfless and dedicated spirit, Christian was ready always to help to those of us who were either 'learning to walk' or already wandering in a labyrinth of administrative jungle, worried by the many frustrations, acts of hostility and denial from opponents of the mutual passion we share called falconry. Christian always tracked down the right approach in order to serve our interests, making all of this sadly necessary bureaucracy and information more understandable for most of us and ever ready explain the importance of his work or some document from his last meeting in Brussels, where he was representing IAF.

From the first moment I saw Christian I knew that he was going to help me a lot. Always smiling, luminous and ever in a good mood and full of wise words, Christian brought this nobility amongst all of us, this ray of forgotten modesty which only a true gentleman such as he could possess.

Pavel Yakimov, Bulgaria



Pavel Yakimov's visit to Patrick Morel in Belgium, when Christian joined them – 25th October 2006. (Pavel Yakimov).



Christian talking to Pavel during the IAF AGM in Sezanne, France, 29th November 2007. (Pavel Yakimov).

Christmas

от: Pavel Cherrug (cherrug@abv.bg) 
до: Christian de Coune (christian.decoune@belgacom.net)

дата: 26.12.2008 20:45

Dear Christian,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

On behalf of my family for your family, please accept our deepest regards for this wonderful holiday and from the bottom of my heart my deepest gratitude for being around and always ready to help. You, my dear Christian, are one of the very few people I respect, admire and appreciate highly.

So, may God brings your charming family the everlasting joy of being together, the wisdom of the silence and off course, good health and long, long live!!!

Best regards, dear Christian!

Pavel and Albena

BULGARIA

wishes


от: Christian de Coune (christian.decoune@belgacom.net) 
до: cherrug@abv.bg
як: kathleen.donck@telenet.be

дата: 27.12.2008 13:35

Dear Pavel and Albena,
your very kind words have touched me deeply, many thanks for them and for your New Year's wishes. May the new year bring you and your family full of happiness and may all your dreams come true. I also wish a strong legal status for falconry in Bulgaria in 2009.
Hope to see you.
Best wishes,
Christian and Kathou.



2010

от: Christian de Coune (info@christian-dec.be) 
до: Pavel Cherrug (cherrug@abv.bg)

дата: 06.01.2010 13:18

Dear Pavel,
many thanks for your kind greetings. On my turn, I wish you a most happy New Year, may all your dreams come true. I also wish a great future to the Bulgarian falconry and a great step forward in 2010.
Christian.



Christian de Coune as an extraordinarily engaging personality

Christian de Coune was a gifted falconer, passionate about his work. His love of the sport provoked other falconers to be authentic and committed to change. His efforts saved and strengthened the position of falconry, legitimising it at the international level.

Falconry belongs to the world's cultural heritage because it has an ancient and glorious past. The great merit of the International Association for Falconry (IAF) is to have a presence wherever falconry has been, or is being, practised, thereby placing IAF on equal footing with the greatest conservation organisations.

Christian was a passionate and spellbinding man, interested in all aspects of nature. He was driven by a fascination of nature which gave him credibility as a true falconer.

He was an extraordinarily engaging personality. His leadership in the organisation and in the art of falconry will forever be missed.

Brigadier Mukhtar Ahmed (Ret'd), President of Falcon Foundation International Pakistan

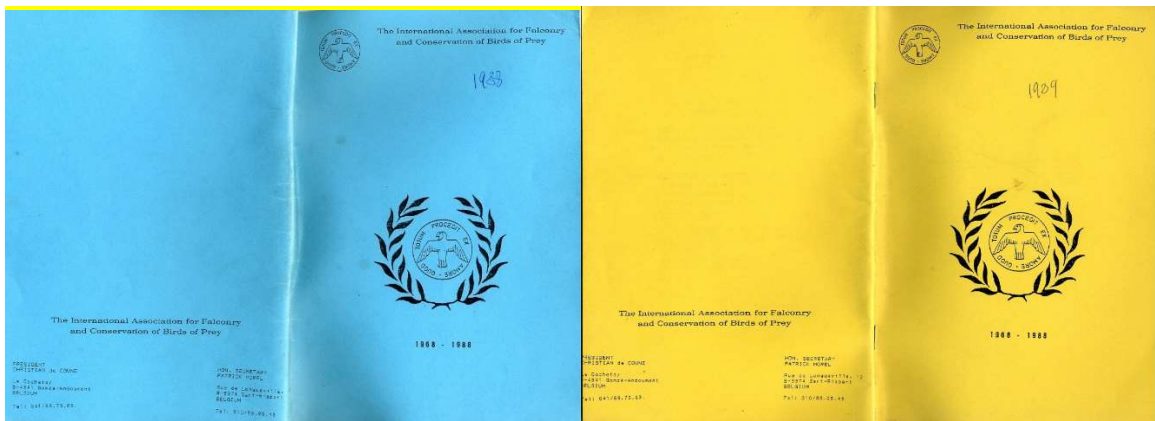
Christian de Coune – my godfather in falconry

In the 1990s, I translated various ornithological texts from Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Estonian into English. I was friends with Alexander Viktorovich Abuladze (Sasha), a well-known expert on birds of prey and the history of falconry in Georgia, who spent part of a year in Tallinn in Estonia. I actively collaborated with Sasha in writing a series of articles on birds of prey and for this reason the main focus of my translations has always been on raptorial birds. Having attended a conference on this group of birds in Extremadura, Spain, Sasha brought me a flyer about the beginning of a large research programme on large falcons in Northern Eurasia, undertaken by Dr Nick Fox in Wales, UK. Thanks to this leaflet I began my collaboration with Dr Fox and his company International Wildlife Consultants Ltd., UK. I had never practised falconry myself but witnessed it for the first time in my life at a military airfield near Brno, in what was then Czechoslovakia, at a meeting on applied ornithology of the CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) countries in October 1989. These roads also brought me to the Second Eurasian Congress of the Raptor Research Foundation, which was held in autumn 1996 at Italy's University of Urbino. There, I got acquainted with many raptor biologists and falconers from around the world with whom I had corresponded several years before. I was also able to meet Dr Nick Fox and his staff, Helen Macdonald and Dr Chris Eastham, in person for the first time. I was the only representative from my native Estonia at that meeting.

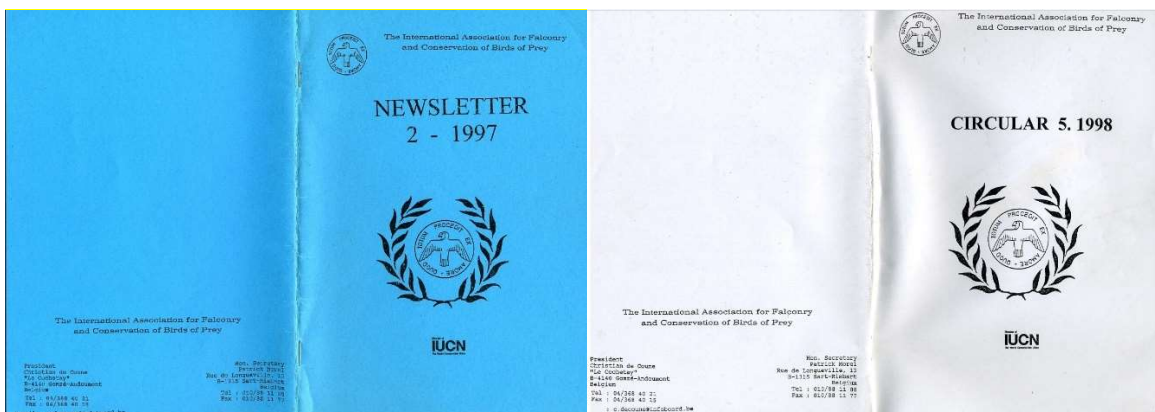
The attention of the congress participants was attracted by an imposing, tall and slim grey-haired gentleman with bouffant black eyebrows and a maharaja-like moustache and beard wearing green golfers. He was talking to a lot of colleagues and it was obvious that he was also known to a host of people. I started listening. He spoke to many of his colleagues in English, many in German and many in French. It was obvious that language barriers were not

his thing. After a while I became his ‘victim’: having ascertained that I was from Estonia, he unhesitatingly broke the ice and asked whether there was falconry in my home country. I told him that there were only fragmentary and incomplete historical references and that it was not developed in Estonia now. The next question – “are you personally interested in falconry?” I answered “yes, of course”, explaining that I considered it a unique fascinating spectacle and the greenest form of all hunting. After that Christian de Coune invited me to represent Estonia within IAF and, in time, I became the organisation’s information counsellor for the whole Russian-speaking area of the former USSR. Thanks to Christian, my long-term collaboration with the IAF started and he became my godfather in a way.

After this meeting I began to regularly receive IAF Information Bulletins from Christian which he compiled, printed and bound in a small typographical workshop in the basement of his house.



IAF Newsletters for 1988 and 1989.



IAF Newsletter for 1997 (part 2) and Circular 5 for 1998.

In 2000 Christian and his friend Georges Wilket travelled through Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. They came to Tallinn too. I invited them to my parents' cottage near Tallinn, by the sea. We did not go there alone – my friend and colleague Alexander Abuladze joined us. It is quite an elite *dacha* district, and the construction there is expensive, as is the land. Walking along the row of notably luxurious houses Christian inquired about the approximate price of the land plots and the price of one of the houses. Giving him the approximate amounts, I will never forget Christian's answer: "We have roughly the same prices in Belgium." I could see by the look on his face that this comparison had made an indelible impression on him too. We then walked along the coast to Kakumäe Cape and admired the bird life on two small islets, rich in avifauna. Then we drank tea and talked about everything. Sadly, we had only limited time – our guests were in a hurry to go about their business.

Later we repeatedly met and talked with Christian at various meetings and conferences and I always admired his tact and diplomatic skills. Even when he strongly disagreed with his interlocutor, without blinking an eye, he continued the discussion and defended his position in a friendly manner, sometimes smiling but never giving up. Such diplomatic tact is possessed by few. In my opinion, this quality allowed him to attract a large number of supporters to the sport and to widen the membership of the organisation in many countries.

At the same time, when the situation so demanded, at many meetings Christian was fearless and unhesitating in boldly and forcefully defending and advocating falconry. He always stood up and spoke out, even when he clearly understood that he was outnumbered and the forces were unequal. He was a brave, determined falconer and desperate advocate for falconry. I well remember situations when falconers were repeatedly accused of stealing eggs or chicks in the most general terms. In such cases Christian stood up firmly, asked for the floor (his face often turned red) and addressed such accusers directly and bluntly: "Do you have evidence? Then, please, the facts on the table: time, place and names of these poachers. If not, please do not spread rumours and do not slander falconers!"

In the 2000s I was a member of the IAF Advisory Committee. It so happened that at some point after the end of Christian's presidency he was not included as an Advisor. However, I was sure that as an expert, with his knowledge, experience and language skills, he would make a huge difference to the Committee. I proposed him to the Committee and was very pleased when Christian rejoined the IAF Board.



Christian as IAF representative at a meeting of IUCN's Working Group on Sustainable Use.

The IAF was very lucky to have a man like Christian de Coune and we bow our heads in respect to him!

Jevgeni Shergalin, Estonia; Archivist of the Falconry Heritage Trust, Wales, UK.

Part 2. Photos of Christian de Coune (1941-2011), President of IAF during 1984-1998.



At the 1984 IAF AGM in Sögel, FRG, with Charles de Ganay. (Patrick Morel).



Three IAF Presidents at IAF AGM in Sögel, 1984: Christian with IAF ex-presidents of IAF Charles de Ganay and Toni Lutz. (Patrick Morel).



IAF AGM at Stadtlohn, FRG, 1988. From left to right: Cees de Bruin (Netherlands); Roger Upton (UK); Jan Meijvogel (Netherlands); Umberto Caproni di Taliedo (Italy); Cyril Morley (UK); Eckart Schormair (FRG); Christian de Coune (Belgium); Dr George Luke (Ireland); Niels Tøttrup (Denmark); Robert Kenward (UK); Anthony Jack (UK). (Photo: Kinya Nakajima, courtesy of Dr Keiya Nakajima).



IAF AGM at Stadtlohn, 1988. Left to right: Cees de Bruin (Netherlands); Roger Upton (UK); Jan Meijvogel (Netherlands); Umberto Caproni di Taliedo (Italy); Cyril Morley (UK); Eckart Schormair (FRG); Kinya Nakajima (Japan); Christian de Coune (Belgium); Dr George Luke (Ireland); Robert Kenward (UK); Anthony Jack (UK). (Photo: Kinya Nakajima, courtesy of Dr Keiya Nakajima).



IAF AGM at Stadtlohn, 1988. Left to right: Umberto Caproni di Taliedo (Italy); Niels Tøttrup (Denmark); Roger Upton (UK); Christian de Coune (Belgium); Kinya Nakajima (Japan); Robert Kenward (UK); Richard Holmstrom (USA); Eckart Schormair (FRG). Anthony Jack (UK) is nearest, facing away. (Photo: Kinya Nakajima, courtesy of Dr Keiya Nakajima).



Christian talking to Dr Lakos István at Field Meet of Nemzetközi Solymász Találkozó in Hódmezővásárhely, Hungary, October 1989. (Frigyes Bogyai).



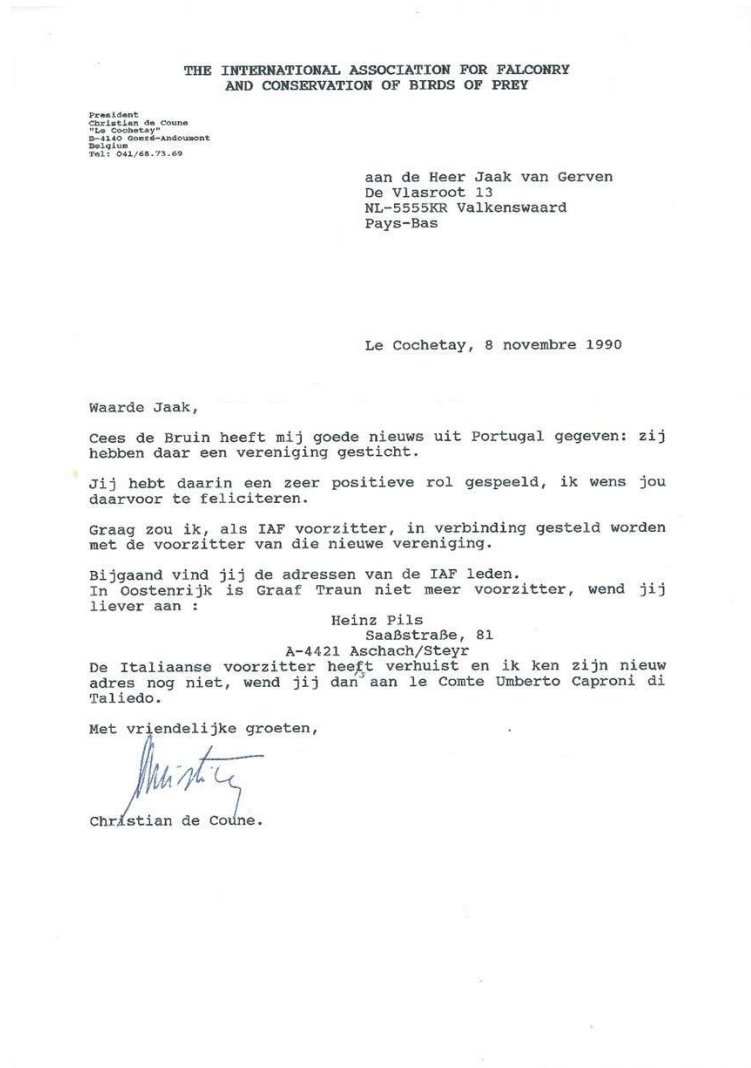
Field meet at Le Ferme De Tempeliers in Overijsse, Belgium, 1989. From left: Jacques van Gerven, Mrs Mary van de Wall, Christian de Coune, Joost van de Wall. (Photo by Mrs Basset (Switzerland), courtesy of Jacques van Gerven).



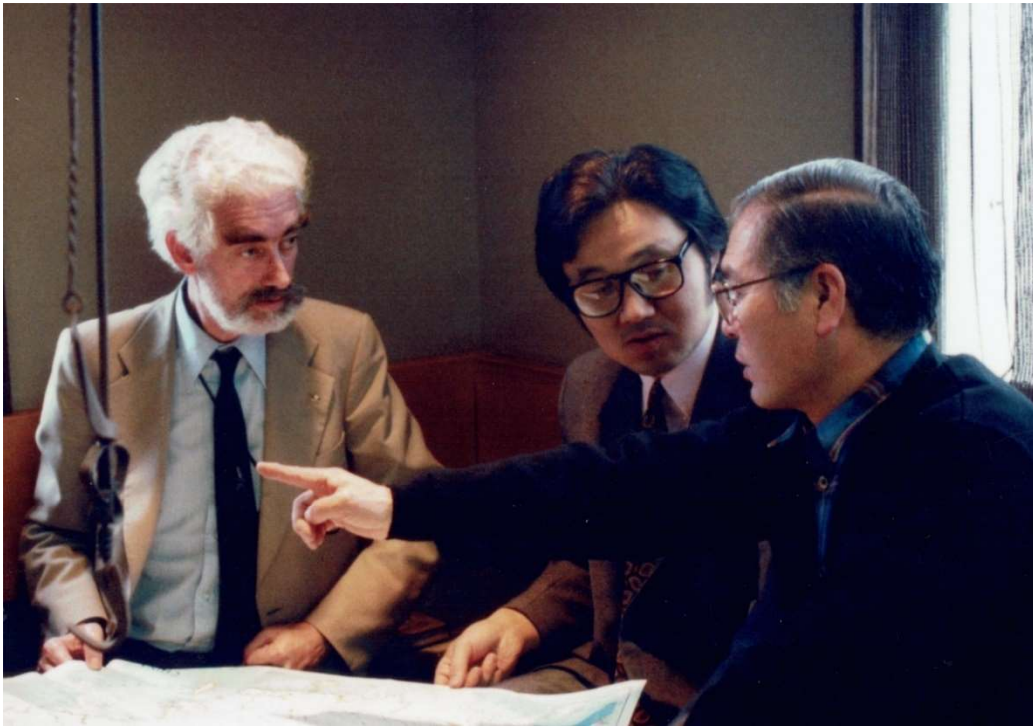
From left: Jacques van Gerven, Christian and Maria Natália Brites de Guedes during the opening of the Valkerijmuseum's 'Falconry in Portugal' exhibition, Valkenswaard, Netherlands, 1989. (Jacques van Gerven).



Overview of the 'Falconry in Portugal' exhibition at the Valkerijmuseum, 1989. (Jacques van Gerven).



Letter of 8th November 1990 from Christian to Jacques van Gerven (Jacques van Gerven).



Visit to Japan Falconiformes Center, Owariasahi, 16th March 1992. Left to right: Christian, unknown, Kinya Nakajima. (Photo: Kinya Nakajima, courtesy of Dr Keiya Nakajima).



*IAF meeting in Ameland, Netherlands, November 1992. Left to right; **sitting**: Cyril Morley (WHC, Wales); Peter Sapara (DFO, Germany); Niels Tøttrup (DFK, Denmark); Paul Fogarty (IHC, Ireland). **Standing**: Peter Bekkers (AM, Netherlands), Treasurer; Christian de Coune (CMB, Belgium), Chairman; Anthony Jack (BFC, England); Jan Meijvogel (AM, Netherlands); Cees de Bruin (AM, Netherlands). (Photo: Anny van Wingerden, courtesy of Frits Kleyn).*



Christian with Dr Walter Bednarek (FRG) at the European Meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation, Canterbury, UK, 11th-15th September 1993. (Bednarek, 1994).



Venue for 1994 IAF meeting – Schloß Clemenswerth, Sögel, Germany. (Frits Kleyn).



*IAF meeting at Schloß Clemenswerth, Sögel, 29th October 1994. Missing: Kinya Nakajima (JFC, Japan); Anny van Wingerden (AM, Netherlands). Left to right; **standing**: Darius Daugela (Lithuania); Alexandre Vintchevski (Belarus); Jesper Brünnich (DFK, Denmark); Robert MacIntyre (NAFA, USA); Morten Clausen (DFK, Denmark); Patrick Morel (CMB, Belgium), Secretary; Gilles Nortier (ANFA, France); Sigrid Schwenk (DFO, Germany); Hans Albrecht Hewicker (DFO, Germany); Eckart Schormair (DFO, Germany); Heinz Pils (ÖFB, Austria). **Sitting**: Umberto Caproni (CFI, Italy); Werner Kitzman (SFK, Switzerland); Peter Bekkers (AM, Netherlands), Treasurer; Christian de Coune (CMB, Belgium), Chairman; Wim van de Vlasakker (AM, Netherlands); Cees de Bruin (AM, Netherlands); Anthony Jack (BFC, England). (Photo: Anny van Wingerden, courtesy of Frits Kleyn).*



Château de Fleury-en-Bière, France – venue for IAF AGM, October 1995. (Wikipedia)



IAF AGM at Fleury-en-Bière, October 1995. Kinya Nakajima (Japan); Patrick Morel (Belgium); Peter Bekkers (Netherlands); Dr Pierre Basset (Switzerland); Anthony Jack (UK); Eckart Schormair (Germany); Paul Fogarty (Ireland); Alexandre Vintchevski (Belarus); Adrian Williams (Wales, UK); Philippe Justeau (France); Carlos Crespo (Portugal); Johan Mollen (Netherlands); Christian de Coune (Belgium); Dr Robert Kenward (UK); Robbie Wilson (UK). (Photo: Anny van Wingerden, courtesy of Frits Kleyn).



IAF AGM at Fleury-en-Bière, October 1995. Kinya Nakajima (Japan); Patrick Morel (Belgium); Dr Pierre Basset (Switzerland); Anny van Wingerden (Netherlands); Anthony Jack (UK); Paul Fogarty (Ireland); Eckart Schormair (Germany); Cees de Bruin (Netherlands); Adrian Williams (Wales, UK); Alexandre Vintchevski (Belarus); Philippe Justeau (France); Carlos Crespo (Portugal); Johan Mollen (Netherlands); Christian de Coune (Belgium); Dr Robert Kenward (UK); Robbie Wilson (UK). (Courtesy of Frits Kleyn).



*IAF AGM in Schwetzingen, Germany, October 1996. From left; **standing:** Douglas Morgans (WHC, UK); Alexandre Vintchevski (Belarus); Anthony Jack (UK); Carlos Crespo (Portugal); Johan Mollen (Netherlands); Christian de Coune (Belgium); unknown; Peter Bekkers (Netherlands); Anny van Wingerden (Netherlands); Anthony Crosswell (UK); Gilles Nortier (France); unknown; Patrick Morel (Belgium); Toni Lutz (Switzerland). **Sitting:** Adrian Williams (Wales, UK); unknown, Antonio Carapuco (Portugal); Dr Robert Kenward (UK). (Photo by hotel staff).*



IAF AGM, Amarillo, Texas, USA, 21st November 2000. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



IAF AGM, Amarillo, 21st November 2000. From left to right: Frank Bond; António Carapuço; Anthony Crosswell; Patrick Morel; Roy Beers; Christian de Coune. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



Hawking near Amarillo, IAF AGM, 22nd November 2000. From left to right: Gary Timbrell (Ireland); Christian de Coune (Belgium); Atadurdy Eyeberdiyev (Turkmenistan). (Keiya Nakajima).



IAF AGM delegates near Amarillo, 22nd November 2000. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



Hawking at IAF/NAFA meet, Amarillo, November 2000. Christian and Tony Huston with a passage prairie falcon. (János Tóth).



Hawking near Amarillo, November 2000. Left to right: unknown; Christian; Tony Huston; János Tóth. (Courtesy of János Tóth).



Christian at the 'Falconry in Slovenia: Pro and Contra' Conference held at the Technical Museum of Slovenia, Vrhnika. 14th October 2003. To Christian's right is Dr Miran Cas, Forestry Institute of Slovenia. (Patrick Morel).



Christian talking to Dr Igor Tavcar at the 'Falconry in Slovenia: Pro and Contra' Conference. To Dr Tavcar's left is Mr Tomaz Mihelic, Delegate from BirdLife Slovenia. (Patrick Morel).



Christian with Dr Igor Tavcar at 'Falconry in Slovenia' Conference. Dr Roman Savic, ex-President of the Slovenian Falconers' Association, is to Christian's right. (Patrick Morel).



The same conference. (Photo courtesy of Dr Roman Savic).



IAF AGM in Abu Dhabi, UAE, 24th September 2004. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



In front of Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital during IAF AGM, September 2004. (Anthony Crosswell).



IAF AGM in Opočno, Czech Republic, 5th October 2005. At table, left to right: János Tóth (Hungary); William Johnston (USA); Juan Carlos Rojo (Mexico); Anton Moravčík (Slovakia); Adrian Lombard (RSA); Christian de Coune (Belgium); Keiya Nakajima (Japan). (Courtesy of Dr Keiya Nakajima).





Christian speaks at IAF AGM, Opočno, 5th October 2005. (Pavel Yakimov).



IAF AGM, Opočno, 5th October 2005. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



Dinner at Obecní Dům restaurant, Prague. (Bohumil Straka).



With Frank Bond and Françoise Morel, Obecní Dům restaurant, Prague. (Bohumil Straka).



St Hubert's Mass, Opočno. (Bohumil Straka).



Delegates gathered for St Hubert's Mass, Opočno. (Bohumil Straka).



Opočno square. (From Frank Bond's archive).



Delegates gathered for hawking at Opočno. (Frank Bond's archive).



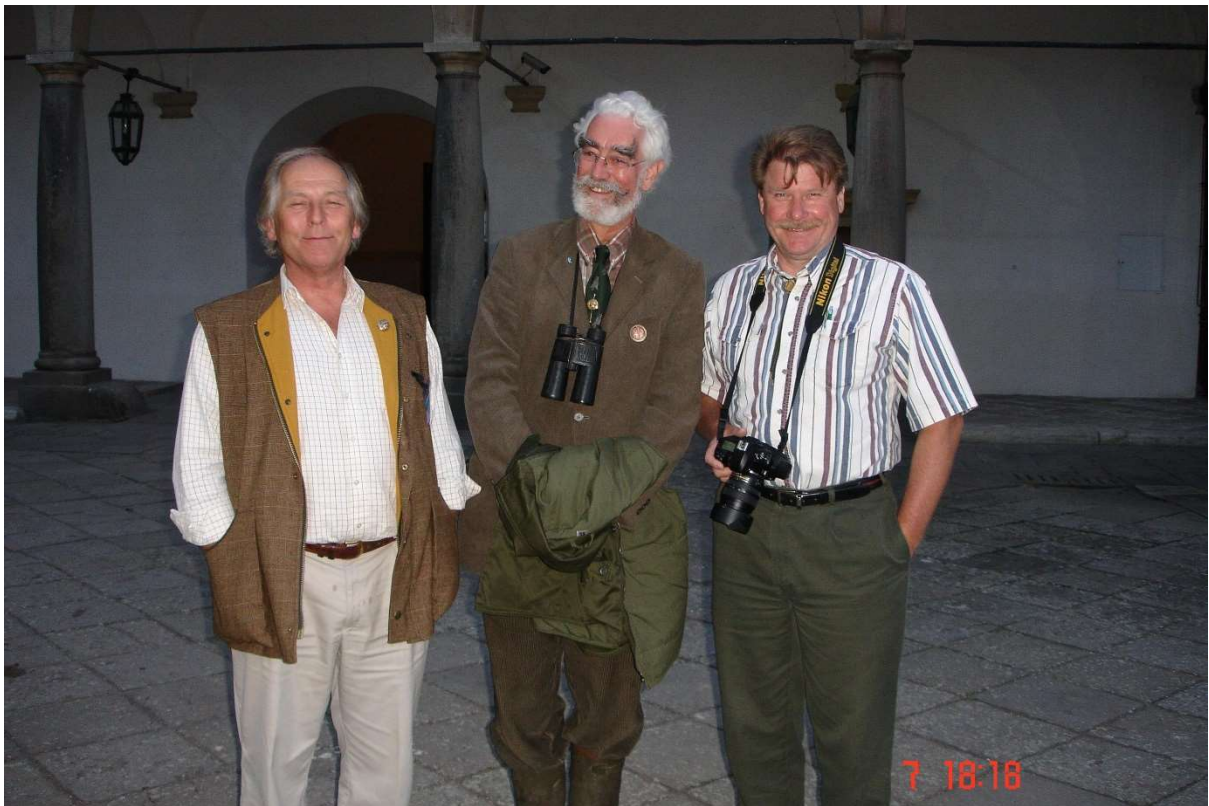
IAF meeting at Opočno Castle. (Ladislav Melo).



Dinner at Obecni Dům, Prague. (Patrick Morel).



Prague Opatov VIP evening. (Patrick Morel).



Castle courtyard, Opočno: Anthony Crosswell, Christian and Dr Tim Kimmel. (Patrick Morel).



Castle courtyard, Opočno: Kathou, Christian and Terry Large. (Anthony Crosswell).



Castle courtyard, Opočno. (Anthony Crosswell).



Dance at national evening, Opočno. (Yukio Asaoka).



Out with eagle group, Opočno. (Petr Zvolanek).



Opočno Castle night visit. (Petr Zvolanek).



Opočno Castle night visit. (Anthony Crosswell).



Opočno Castle night visit. (Petr Zvolanek).



On hawking trip during IAF AGM, Opočno. (Pavel Yakimov).



Christian with Lt Col Kent Carnie at Festival of Falconry, Englefield Estate, Berkshire, England, July 2007. (Peter Devers).



Christian with Frank Bond. Festival of Falconry, Englefield, July 2007. (Peter Devers).



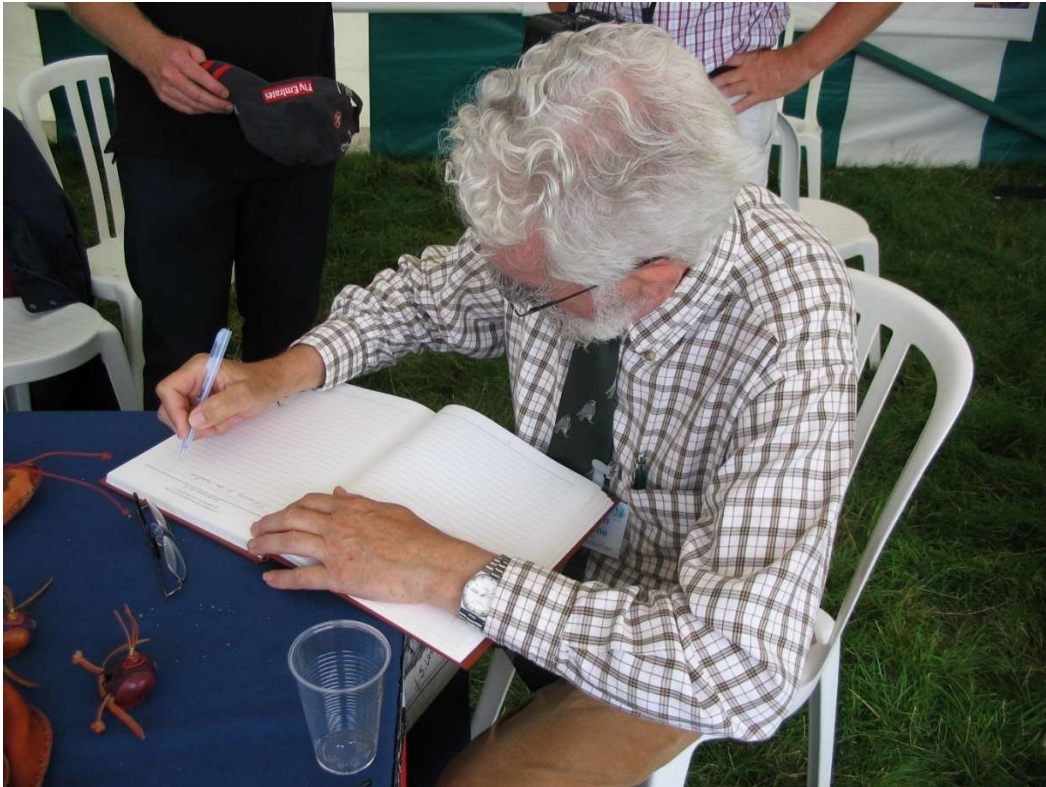
From left: Frank Bond, Peter Devers, Christian and Lt Col Kent Carnie. Festival of Falconry, July 2007. (Courtesy of Peter Devers).



From left: Dr Tim Kimmel, Frank Bond, Christian and Lt Col Kent Carnie. Festival of Falconry, July 2007. (Peter Devers).



From left: Dr Tim Kimmel, Noel Hyde, Christian and Debbie Stewart. Festival of Falconry, July 2007. (Courtesy of Debbie Stewart).



Christian writes his wishes to Wingspan staff in New Zealand. Festival of Falconry, July 2007. (Debbie Stewart).

*A most interesting and well-matched pair, they go higher
and higher into the clouds, often till lost to view.*

Major Charles Hawkins Fisher, 1901

Falconry is an incentive to consume
birds of prey, Falconry may be a
tool for consuming the vermin that
wild birds of prey are.

Allowing falconry as a well regulated
way will not harm the wild population
of birds of prey it can benefit it.
There are lots of examples of that
throughout the world.

Min. Stanley de Louke
former president of the IAF. 14th July 2007.

Christian's message from the photo above. Festival of Falconry, July 2007. (Debbie Stewart).



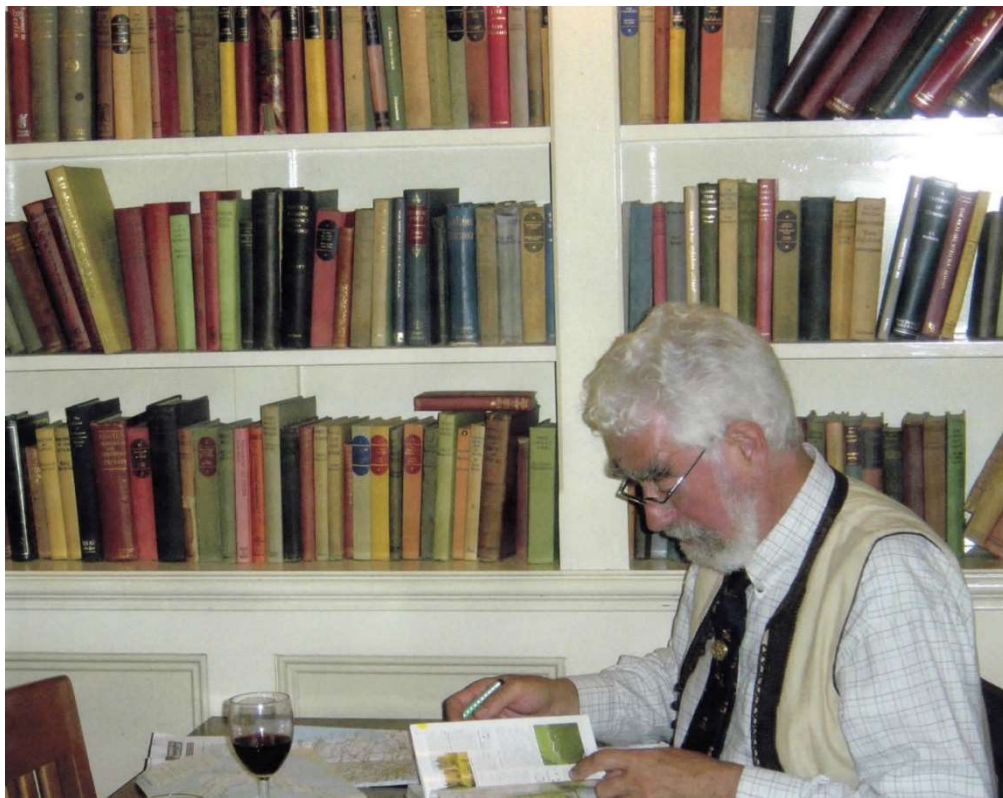
Christian together with other national delegates at IAF AGM during Festival of Falconry, July 2007. (Debbie Stewart).



National flag of New Zealand with wishes and signatures of national delegates at Festival of Falconry in Abu Dhabi, UAE, December 2011. (Debbie Stewart).



Christian's signature (at centre) on New Zealand flag alongside wishes and signatures of other national delegates at Festival of Falconry, Abu Dhabi, 2011. (Debbie Stewart).



Christian working in his home library, July 2007. (Photo by Kathleen Donck).



Christian with Janusz Sielicki, the main organiser of the Peregrine Conference in Piotrowo/Poznań, Poland, 19th –23rd September 2007. (János Bagyura).



Christian talking at the IAF AGM in Sézanne, France, 28th November 2007. (Anthony Crosswell).



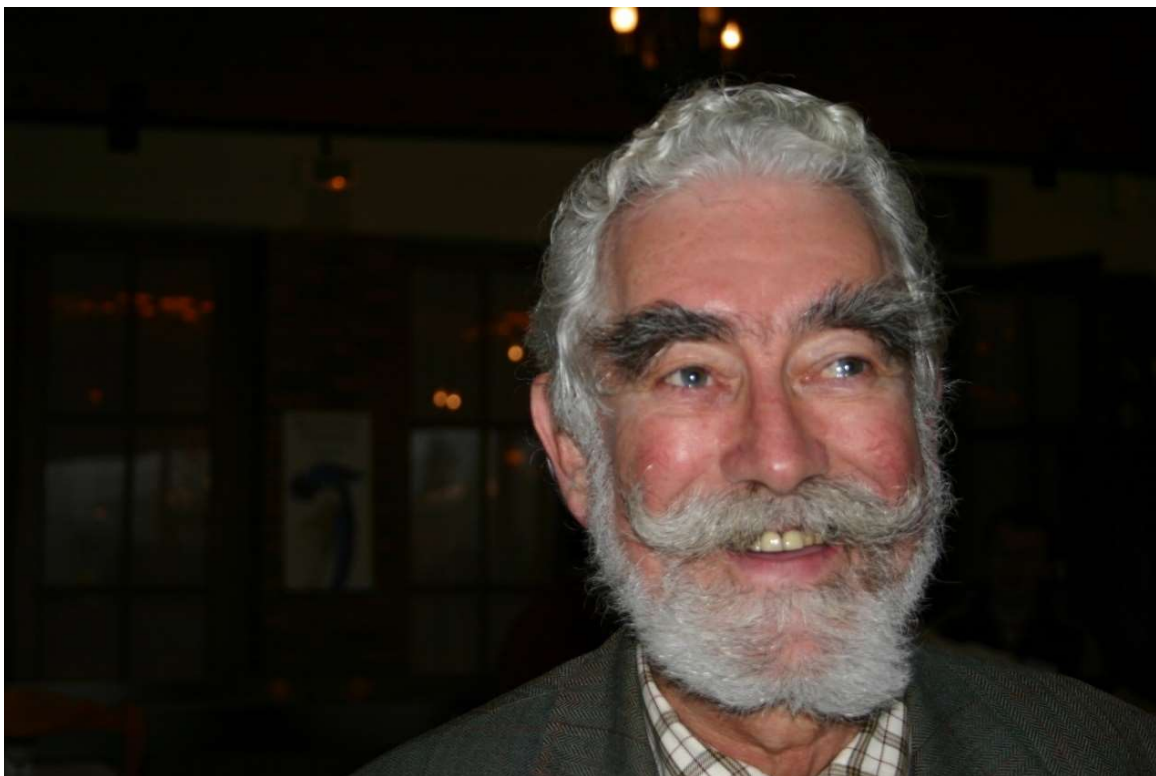
IAF AGM, Sézanne, 28th November 2007. From left to right: Frank Bond, Patrick Morel Ferrante Pratesi, Christian de Coune, Charles de Ganay, Toni Lutz. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



IAF AGM, Sézanne, 29th November 2007. From left to right: Frank Bond, Patrick Morel, Ferrante Pratesi, Toni Lutz, Christian de Coune, Charles de Ganay. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



IAF AGM, Sézanne, 29th November 2007. From left to right: Frank Bond, Patrick Morel, Ferrante Pratesi, Toni Lutz, Christian de Coune, Charles de Ganay. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



A happy Christian at IAF AGM in Sézanne, 29th November 2007. (Anthony Crosswell).



President of Turkmenistan Falconers' Club Atadurdy Eyeberdiyev greets Christian at IAF AGM in Sézanne, 29th November 2007. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



Dinner during IAF AGM in Sézanne, 29th November 2007. (Anthony Crosswell).



Dr Keiya Nakajima with Christian at the International Festival of Falconry, Englefield, 14th July 2007. (Courtesy of Dr Keiya Nakajima).



Christian with Annaaman Movlamov (Turkmenistan) and Patrick Morel at Festival of Falconry, July 2007. (Frank Bond's archive).



From left to right: Rzov Khemrayev, Christian, Annaaman Movlamov, Patrick Morel, Ataturdy Eyeberdiyev at Festival of Falconry, 16th July 2007. (Frank Bond's archive).



Festival of Falconry, 16th July 2007. Left to right: Rzov Khemrayev, Christian, Annaaman Movlamov, Frank Bond, Ataturdy Eyerbediyev, Muhamad Issabekov. (Anthony Crosswell).



Christian with Kathou and Korean falconers Chris Choi and his girlfriend at Festival of Falconry, 2007. (Frank Bond's archive).



At Festival of Falconry, July 2007. Left to right: Frank Bond, Bohumil Straka, Hichem ben Hmida (Tunisia), Chris Choi, Christian de Coune, Korean falconer, Janusz Sielicki. (Frank Bond's archive).



Christian de Coune with Kathleen Donck. (Mark Williams).



Christian de Coune with Mark Williams. (Courtesy of Mark Williams).



Six Presidents of IAF indoors. (Mark Williams).



Six Presidents of IAF outdoors. (Mark Williams).



Christian with Robert Bagley and his daughter Erin. (Mark Williams).



Dieter Schramm with Christian at Festival of Falconry, July 2007. (Janusz Sielicki).



Dieter Schramm with Christian at Festival of Falconry, July 2007. (Janusz Sielicki).



Christian together with Abdelhak Chaouni (Morocco) at UNSECO Intangible Cultural Heritage Meeting, Paris, June 2008. (Frank Bond's archive).



Christian at UNSECO Intangible Cultural Heritage Meeting, Paris, June 2008. (Frank Bond's archive).



Christian at UNSECO Intangible Cultural Heritage Meeting, Paris, June 2008. (Frank Bond's archive).



Christian talking to Dr Georges Evrard - chief of Belgian CITES. 10th June 2008. (Patrick Morel).



Two ex-Presidents of IAF, Christian de Coune and Charles de Ganay, in the house of another ex-IAF President, Patrick Morel, at Sart-Risbart, Belgium, for Patrick's 60th birthday feast 6th November 2008. (Patrick Morel).



Dr Pierre Basset together with Kathleen Donck at Patrick Morel's 60th birthday feast, Sart-Risbart, 6th November 2008. (Patrick Morel).



Christian with Mrs Jennifer Kilian – Frits Kleyn's wife – at Patrick Morel's 60th birthday feast. (Patrick Morel).



Christian with Kathou at Patrick Morel's 60th birthday feast. (Patrick Morel).



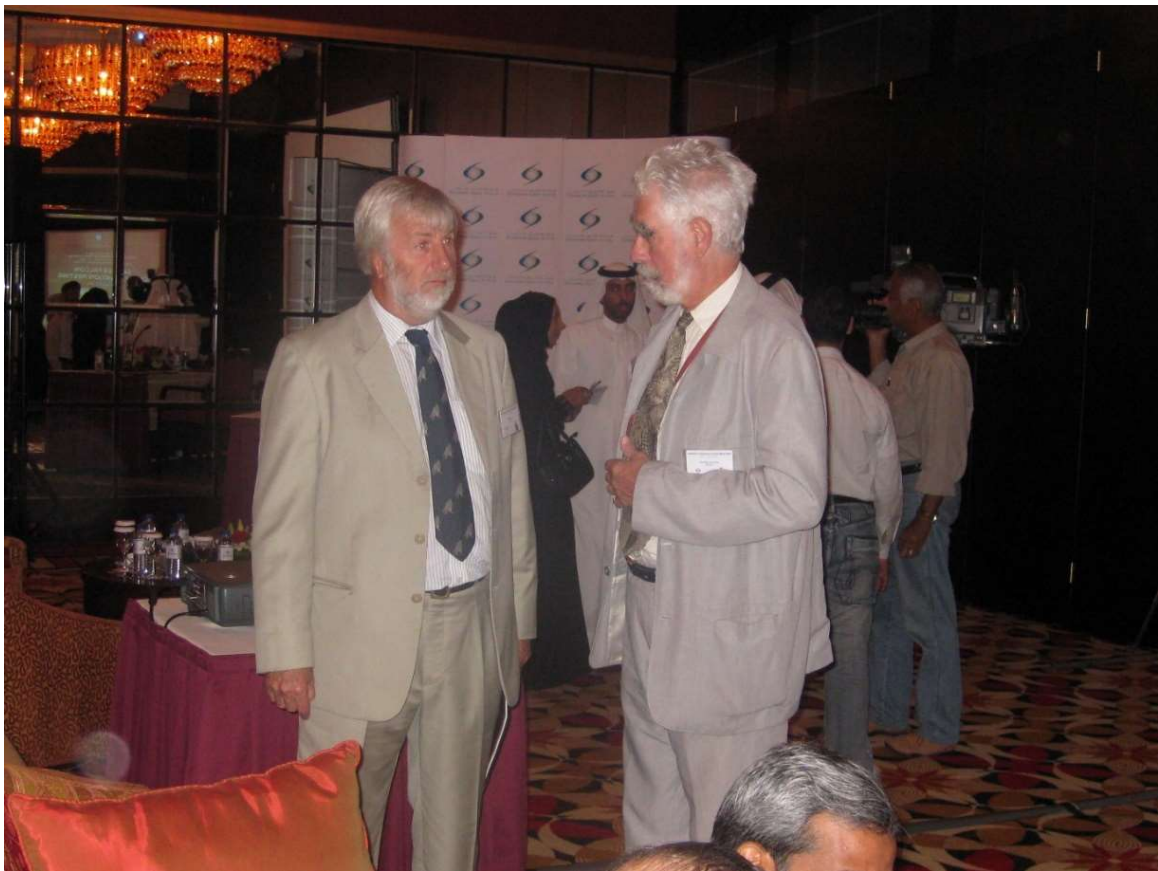
Christian and Kathou at Patrick Morel's 60th birthday feast 7 November 2008. (Patrick Morel).



Together with Gilles Nortier at Patrick Morel's 60th birthday feast. (Patrick Morel).



Christian at Patrick Morel's 60th birthday feast. (Patrick Morel).



Christian talks to Dr Nick Fox at Symposium on Conservation and Research of Saker Falcon in Abu Dhabi, UAE, April 2009. (Vitaliy Vetrov).



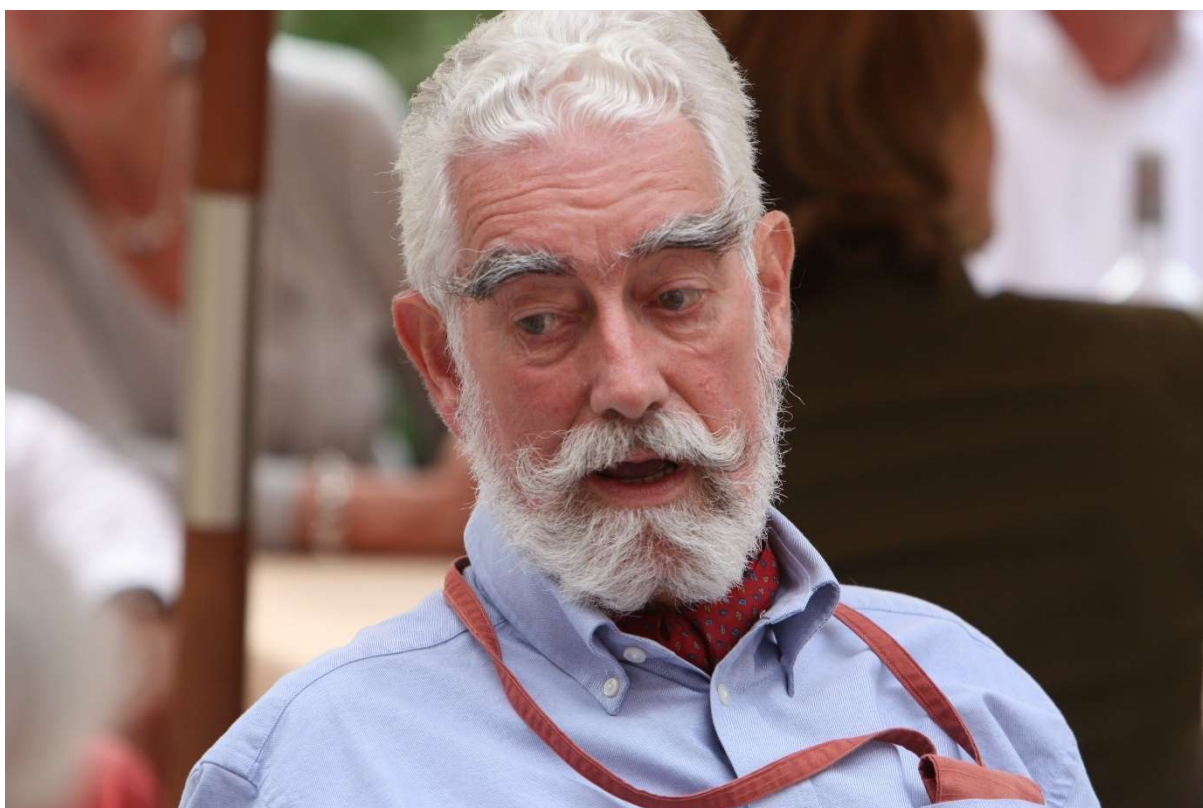
Christian at Symposium on Conservation and Research of Saker Falcon, Abu Dhabi, April 2009. (Jevgeni Shergalin).



Christian from his own article published in the International Journal of Falconry 2009, p.22.



Christian with Michel Mandart, brother of Françoise – Patrick Morel's wife. (Patrick Morel).



At marriage of Myriam Van Hove and Pierre Cuborn, 25th April 2009. (Patrick Morel).



IAF AGM near Reading, UK, 10th July 2009. (Dr Keiya Nakajima).



The IAF delegates under the Spassky Hrad Castle, Slovakia, October 2010. From the left: Christian de Coune (Belgium), Dr A.P.F. Lombard (South Africa), Max Fehlner (Germany) and Z. Al-Maadeed (Qatar). (Tomáš Krivjanský).



IAF delegates in the Flipper Hotel restaurant, Vrbov, Slovakia, 19th October 2010, watching footage of the day's hawking filmed earlier by the Halali editorial office. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



IAF delegates at the Flipper Hotel, 19th October 2010. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



Delegates in Slovakia, from left: Igor Tavcar (Slovenia), Christian, Frank Bond (USA), W. Wrijnhoek (Netherlands), L. Molnar (Slovakia), Adrian Lombard (South Africa), Gary Timbrell (Ireland), Yukihiro Fujita (Japan) and M. Sturcel (Slovakia). (Tomáš Krivjanský).



Delegates at the 41st IAF General Assembly enjoy the traditional hunting horn fanfares, Palarikovo Castle, Slovakia. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



IAF General Assembly delegates listen to horn fanfares at Palarikovo Castle. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



IAF delegates viewing the museum. From right: Abdelhak Chaouni (Morocco), unknown (Qatar), H.T. Wagenaar (Netherlands), M. Ciz (Slovakia), M. Acimovic (Serbia), Christian de Coune (Belgium) and Bakyt Karnakbayev (Kazakhstan) with camera. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



IAF delegates after a successful day's hawking, Slovakia. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



IAF delegates at the ceremonial laying out of the quarry, Slovakia. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



Delegates at breakfast in a spacious tent in the thermal complex, Slovakia. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



The participants during the official dinner, Slovakia. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



From the right: A. Middleton, Adrian Lombard, Christian, Sylvia Lombard and Veronique Blontrock, Slovakia. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



Christian with shortwing group, Slovakia. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



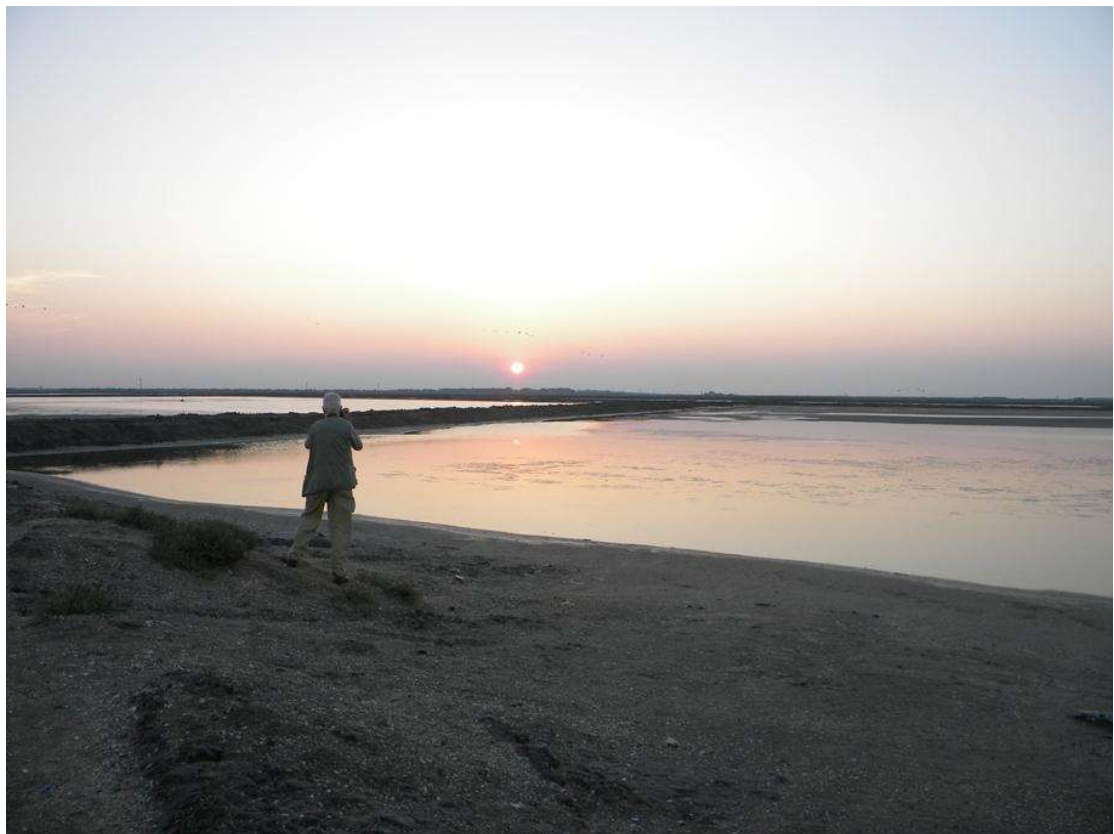
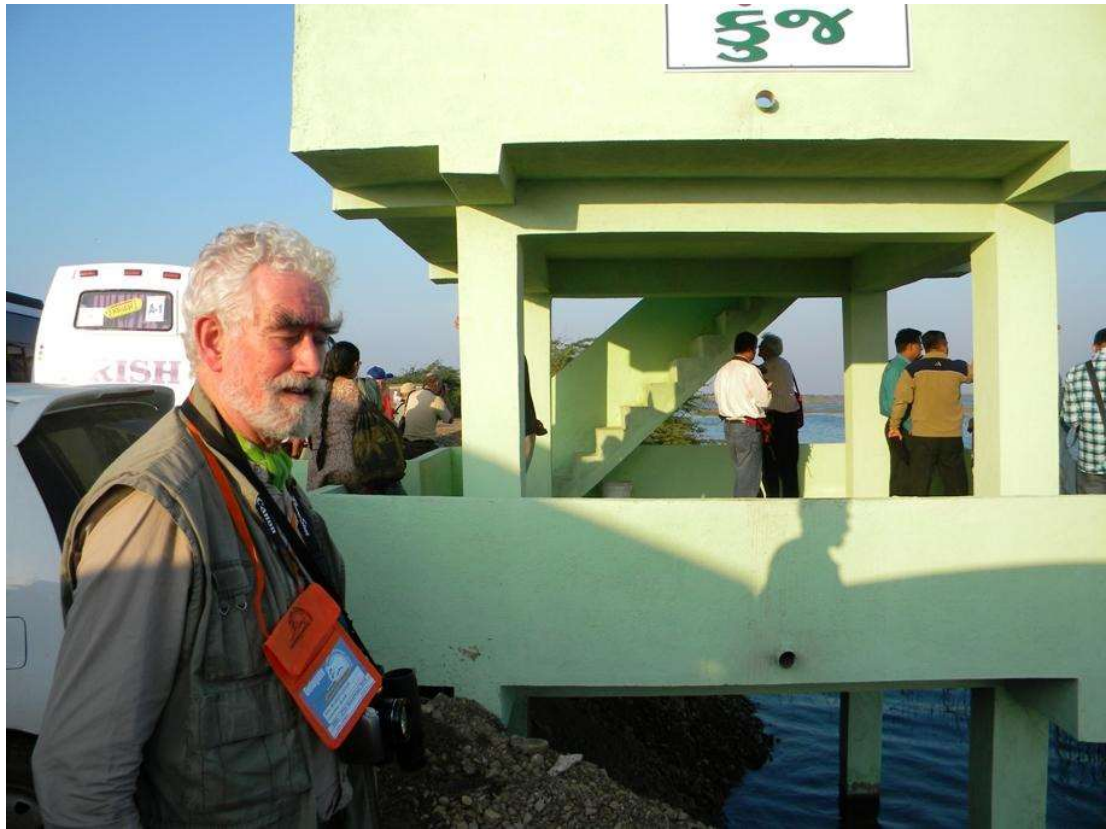
Hawking foxes under Spassky Hrad Castle, Slovakia. From left: Renaat “Ronny” Broos (Belgium) with golden eagle, Abdelhak Chaouni (Morocco) and Zayed Al-Ali Al-Maadeed (Qatar). (Tomáš Krivjanský).



IAF delegates at ceremonial falconers' assembly, Slovakia. (Tomáš Krivjanský).



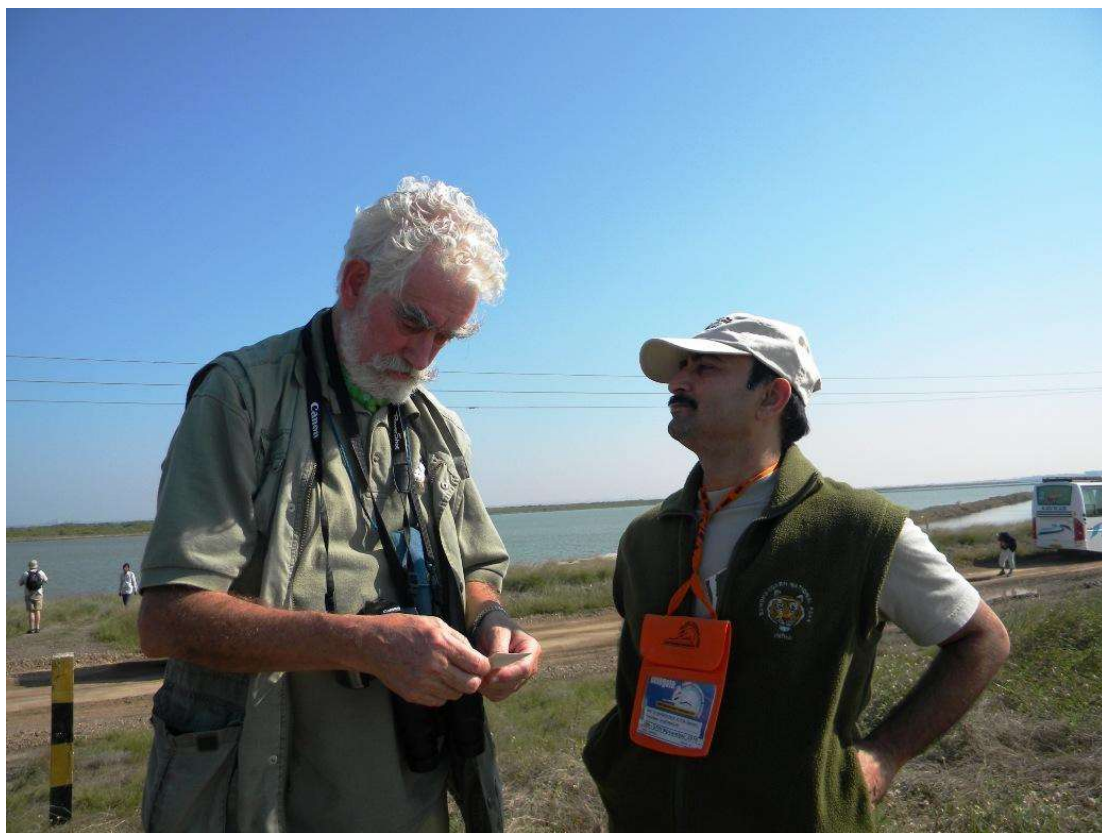
Christian at the Global Birdwatchers' Conference in Gujarat, India, 2010. (Dr Alexander Abuladze).



Christian at the Global Birdwatchers' Conference in Gujarat, India, 2010. (Dr Alexander Abuladze).



Christian with Shri Falgunsinh Jhala.



Christian exchanges business cards with Dr Bharat Jethva at the Global Birdwatchers' Conference in Gujarat, India, 2010. (All photos from the event: Dr Alexander Abuladze).



Annual General Meeting of Belgian Club Marie de Bourgogne, and delayed celebration of Christian's 70th birthday, 2011. (Patrick Morel).





Photos from the same barbeque dedicated to Christian's 70th birthday (Tula Stapert).



Funeral of Christian de Coune, 26th September 2011. (Courtesy of Patrick Morel).



Funeral of Christian de Coune, 26th September 2011. (Courtesy of Patrick Morel).

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Appendix 1

Article by Christian de Coune

International Representation of Falconry

The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF)

Christian de COUNE

past president of IAF

Some of you will wonder what is that association. Others will not ask that question, because they know what IAF is or simply because they ignore that there is an international association for falconry.

The question that perhaps will immediately come to you is what an international association can do for falconry?

It is very simple, it does exactly the same as what a national association does: just like Klub Sokolikov, IAF represents and defends the interests of falconry. The difference is that those two associations do not speak with the same interlocutors.

Klub Sokolnikov talks to the Polish Ministry of the Environment, to the Polish hunters organisations, etc..., while the IAF talks to the Council of Europe, to The European Parliament, to CITES, to the Federation of European Hunters Association (FACE), etc... Just like the national authorities, the international bodies prefer to deal with only one interlocutor that speaks for the whole community.

As you know, more and more decisions are taken at an international level, it is thus essential that falconry expresses itself with only one voice in the international circles. This necessity has induced representatives of the main falconry associations to form an international association : in May 1968 the IAF was born.

IAF now represents 41 associations from 31 countries.

The first president of the IAF was Jack Mavrogordato, from Great Britain.

Soon IAF gained international recognition thanks to its policy of presence: wherever birds of prey conservation or falconry were addressed, falconry was there through the presence of an IAF delegate.

IAF is also “conservation of birds of prey” : it has organised several international conferences of very high scientific level on management techniques of bird of prey populations, on bird of prey diseases,

on the Goshawk, etc... IAF participates now in bird of prey conservation projects, amongst others in East Europe.

Its part in raptor conservation has received a major recognition: IAF has been democratically elected member of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the world's most important nature conservation organisation. This year the IAF was sponsor of a resolution adopted by the IUCN recognising that saker falcon populations may be subject to sustainable yields.

In 1975, the International Council for Bird Protection (now called BirdLife International) adopted a set of recommendations to the Governments asking them to protect all birds of prey, prohibiting their capture or keeping in captivity. At that time, birds of prey were in a very bad situation and falconers were the target of severe attacks. Although his position was very uncomfortable, the representative of the IAF succeeded in having two recommendations adopted by the First World Conference on Birds of Prey in which the possibility was agreed to grant exceptions to the protection of birds of prey to allow falconers to capture wild birds of prey and keep them in captivity. These two historical texts have saved the life of falconry!

The European Union Bird Directive 79/409 mentions the word "falconry" as a hunting method and allows Member States to authorise the capture and keeping of protected wild birds (among which, birds of prey). These provisions were absent from the Proposal for the Directive, but IAF intervened actively drawing the attention of the European authorities to the fact that falconry had been forgotten in the Proposal and ultimately falconry was saved from a great danger.

The IAF proposed to the CITES to adopt a "passport" allowing falconers to cross borders with their birds without formalities. The proposal has been adopted unanimously by the 130+ countries represented!

Falconry can be, purposely or not, threatened by some bird protection policies; IAF must be very vigilant to avoid such "accidents".

Therefore, IAF needs to be present wherever bird protection may be addressed, not only to be informed in time of what is being prepared but also to be known to the decision makers. This is IAF's policy of presence.

IAF has succeeded in that over the years falconry has not become the non-target victim of some policies; it has succeeded in that falconry has first become tolerated and then accepted at the international level.

Now, from tolerated and accepted, falconry must become useful to bird of prey conservation. Falconers must become increasingly involved in raptor research and conservation. IAF must sustain its

involvement in the main international organisations, like IUCN, WWF, Raptor Research Foundation, and World Working Group for Birds of Prey, etc. . . . This is also IAF's policy of international presence.

The open minded attitude towards falconry at the international level is not always shared by the national politics. IAF can help extending to the national level what it has acquired internationally.

For achieving its goals, IAF needs the support of all its members, therefore IAF's members have been very happy to welcome last year Poland among its membership. IAF had requested help from Poland by using its database and providing laws affecting falconry from Germany and the UK.

Appendix 2. Letters of condolence received by President of IAF Dr Adrian Lombard on the loss of Christian de Coune.

22nd January 2012.

Dear Kathou,

Please forgive me for having taken so long to contact you since Christian's death. My only excuse is that I have been trying to continue the wonderful work that he did on behalf of falconry through the IAF. Christian was a great inspiration to me as well as very wise guide and mentor. I, and the whole of the IAF, miss his presence very deeply, but none of us, I am sure, as much as you.

His wisdom, his calmness, his little words were all so important to our organisation and to our fight to preserve and develop falconry. Many people have expressed their sadness at his loss and their admiration of him. A number of people have sent letters and I have promised to pass these on to you. We remembered him at our Annual General Meeting in Al Ain in December and Frank Bond said a few words in his memory.

I will attach the many letters that I have collected to pass on to you:

Dear Adrian,

Please convey to his family:

Please accept my personal and Estonian falconers' deepest condolences for the sudden death of your husband.

Sincerely,

Dmitri Saksa.

Adrian,

Please follow deep condolence due to such a great loss from whole Polish falconry community.

We use to say "Niech spoczywa w krainie wiecznych lowow" which means "Let him rest in the land of eternal hawking"

Regards,

Adam

Dear Adrian,

In the name of the Macedonian Falconers' Association we would like to express our sincere condolences.

Could you please express the sincere condolences of the Austrian Falconry Association to Kathou!

Best regards, Christian Habich

Christian (de Coune), a Past-President of the IAF, was still a dear friend.

He has been a tireless champion of falconry. He was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word.

This is a great loss to the IAF and to the whole falconry community, and also for the falconry in Czech Republic.

We are much the poorer for his death and his presence will be deeply missed.

Mirka + Lubor Křivkovi, Czech Republic

I am really shocked by this very sad news. Although I never met Christian I contacted him several times and he was of very great help especially regarding falconry laws in Malta.

It is difficult to find words to show my gratitude for this great person but I am sure a look in the eyes will explain.

His wife I never met either but if you please can let her know that for myself especially and for the rest of our club in Malta he was of great help, at least she will know that he was appreciated from us too.

Thanks and best regards Lawrence Formosa

It was really sad news to lose Christian de Coune.

I think that he was excellent person who had various activities on falconry. And, it was my honour to see him at several IAF AGMs, Falconry Festival and science meetings. They are all good memories for me. My father also feel so sad to know it, because he is a friend since 1970's. I would like to express my gratitude for his great works and pray for the repose of his soul.

Please forward my condolence and attachment photos to his wife.

Best regards

Keiya Nakajima – Japan

STUDIEGROEP BEHOUD VALKERIJ (vzw)

Valkerij, ons Immaterieel Cultureel Erfgoed erkend door **Unesco**

Geachte mevrouw,

Uit naam van het bestuur en de leden van Studiegroep Behoud

Valkerij(vzw) wensen wij U onze oprechte deelneming te betuigen bij
het overlijden van uw echtgenoot Christian.

Moyson Luk Secretaris.

Dear Mrs De Coune,

With a great sadness I had received the death of your honourable husband.

For ever I will remember the kindness [of the] Man that was Mr Christian; for sure the De
Coune family will be always in our memory.

Mr Abdelhak Chaouni, Morocco

The Italians join the falconers' condolences for the passing of a great falconer.

I had two opportunities to meet Christian de Coune, first presented in Italy by the late Del
Mastro Calvetti at the international workshop on raptors in Urbino, the second time in
England at the Falconry Festival, and was impressed by his personality.
His passing is a great loss for the international community of falconers.

Andrea Brusa, UNCF Italia

Dear Adrian,

Returning from our hawking-holiday I received your message. I feel very sorry about the passing away of Christian de Coune. He was a very important officer in international falconry and he was a very impressive person. I am happy that I had the chance to meet him a lot. Please give my deepest sympathy to his wife.

Tom Richter

--

Prof. Dr. Thomas Richter, Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Umwelt, Nürtingen-Geislingen

Dear Mr Lombard,

Sorry to hear the very sad news.

Heartfelt condolences from me and fellow falconers from India to the bereaved family members of Christian De Coune.

We feel fortunate having met Christian twice during his visits to India. We mourn the loss of a dear friend and a driving force in the falconry community world wide.

Regards and God Bless you, Hyder and friends - India

Sehr große Anteilnahme zum Tod von Herrn Christian de Coune auch aus Frankfurt am Main.

Der Falknerei- Photograph Dieter Kuhn und seine Tochter Karin Spellucci kannten und schätzten Christian sehr, von etlichen Treffen in Opcno, Tschechische Republik. Wir verloren dann ein wenig den Kontakt, da unsere Ehefrau bzw. Mutter ein Schwerstpflegefall wurde und wir nicht mehr reisen konnten. Im Spätherbst erreichte uns die Nachricht und wir waren sehr betroffen, vor allem tat es uns wahnsinnig leid, dass Christian offenbar langfristig krank war.

Mit aufrichtigem Beileid, Karin und Dieter Spellucci

Dear Kathou,

These letters come from literally all over the world and I can think of nothing that could better express the respect and fondness that all falconers held for your husband. I hope that this will give you some small comfort.

I do know that Christian had plans to bring you to visit us in South Africa and it is a great sadness to me that this will not come to be. If, however, you would wish to make the trip yourself, you would be a very welcome guest and we would love to show you our hospitality. Sylvia and I have a guest house on the Cape Peninsula and we would be very honoured if, some day, you would like to come and stay with us – as our guest. Please stay in touch and do take us up on this offer if it is at all possible.

With condolences and fond regards,

Adrian Lombard