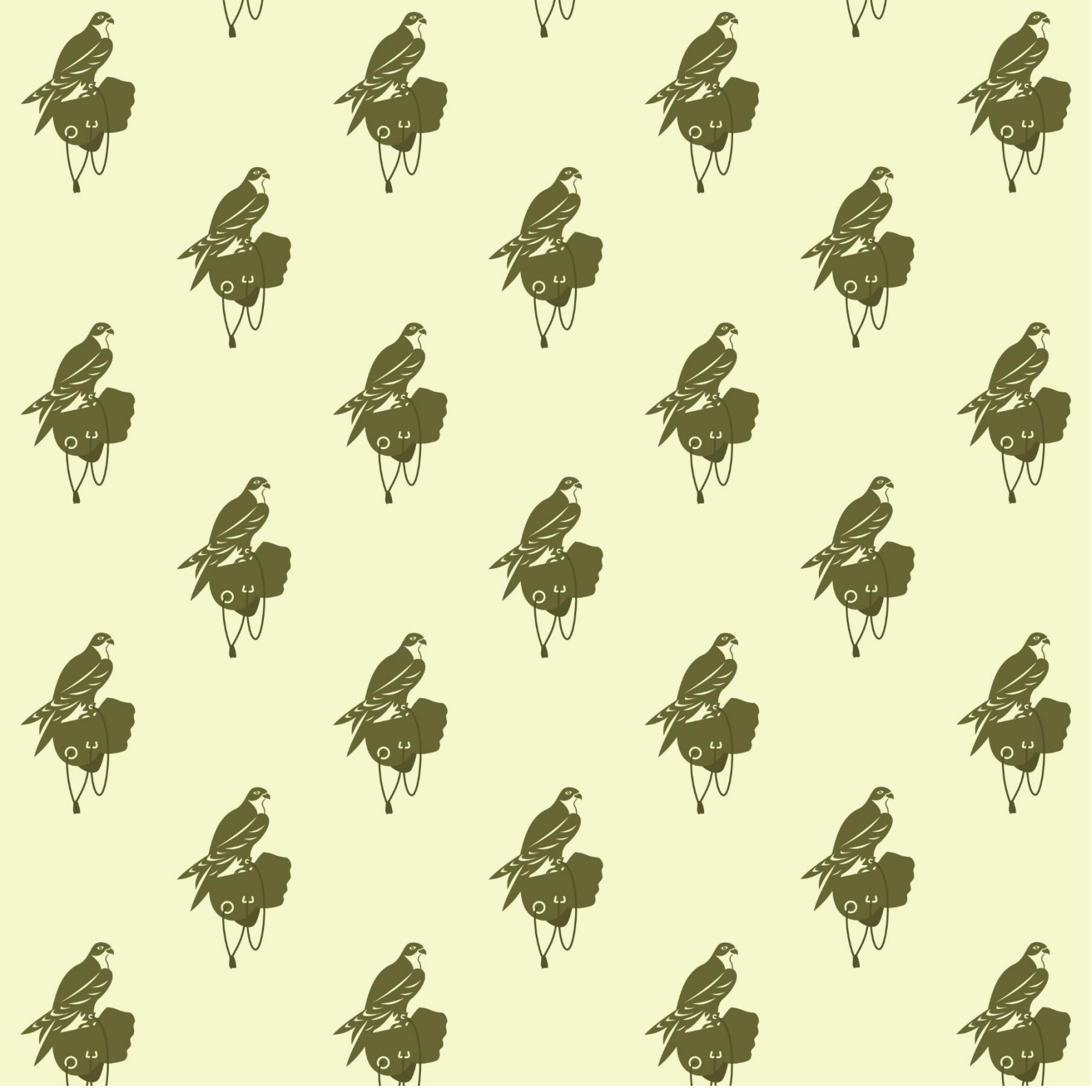


# **YOUNG FALCONERS**







# 1 - Falconry

"Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research."



The International Association for Falconry wants to engage children and young people around the world and give them an opportunity to gain an insight into the art of falconry. You can learn more about falconry on our website. Should you miss something or have questions, please contact us so we may assist you further.

Contact us: [www.iaf.org](http://www.iaf.org)

## What is Falconry?

Falconry is hunting. However, for many people the first time they make contact with falconry is when they see a demonstration with birds of prey, when they read an article in a magazine, or when they see a documentary that involves trained birds of prey. This is not falconry! In this definition, the word "hunt" makes all the difference. The objective of falconry and its existence is the act of hunting with trained birds of prey.

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



Human development has drastically reduced the amount of natural habitat available for wildlife. Very few reserves are large enough to hold viable raptor populations. Most raptors, and other wildlife, must therefore share habitat with humans. To preserve diverse ecosystems, these areas require knowledge, skills and resource management.

Falconers contribute widely to the knowledge of wild raptor ecology, management and veterinary science. Modern falconers continue a tradition of research that extends back over 800 years to *The Art Of Falconry* by Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. The practice itself, meanwhile, dates even further back to prehistoric times.

Falconers are active conservationists worldwide and have founded international organizations specifically to distribute the knowledge and skills they have developed in order to benefit and protect wild birds of prey and the ecosystems they are part of.

## What is our responsibility for falconry?

Each time a falconer takes a bird to the field, they are not only responsible for their actions and their birds. There also lies a responsibility to represent the history of falconry, and to preserve it for future generations. Falconers are, in truth, representatives of a very old art - a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, in fact<sup>1</sup> - which originated long before our birth and which we hope will be practiced long after our departure.



If we are not able to practice falconry properly and secure its future through a responsible attitude, then we cannot consider ourselves falconers and should perhaps stay away from falconry altogether.

Having a bird of prey has no resemblance to having a pet. Birds of prey have never been domesticated in the way dogs or horses have, and the bond that a falconer develops with their bird is a special one based on hunting companionship. The end result of falconry is completely unique, but getting there requires a lot of time, preparation, personal dedication, knowledge and experience.

By the end of this manual, we hope you will understand better what falconry really is! We hope, too, that you will understand better the dedication, time and commitment that falconry demands.

## 2 - UNESCO and FALCONRY

Falconry is recognized as giving communities and individuals a sense of identity, transmitted from generation to generation and related by communities in response to their environment and their interaction with nature, providing them with continuity.

FALCONRY IS A HERITAGE  
OF HUMANITY

\*<sup>1</sup> Officially recognized by UNESCO - 16 November 2010.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)



### Cultural Heritage

Falconry cannot be learned from books or the internet - it requires a complex range of skills and knowledge that only comes through practical experience. Falconers guide and mentor beginners, and they learn from each other based on different experiences and cultures.

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

# 3 - What is a Bird of Prey?

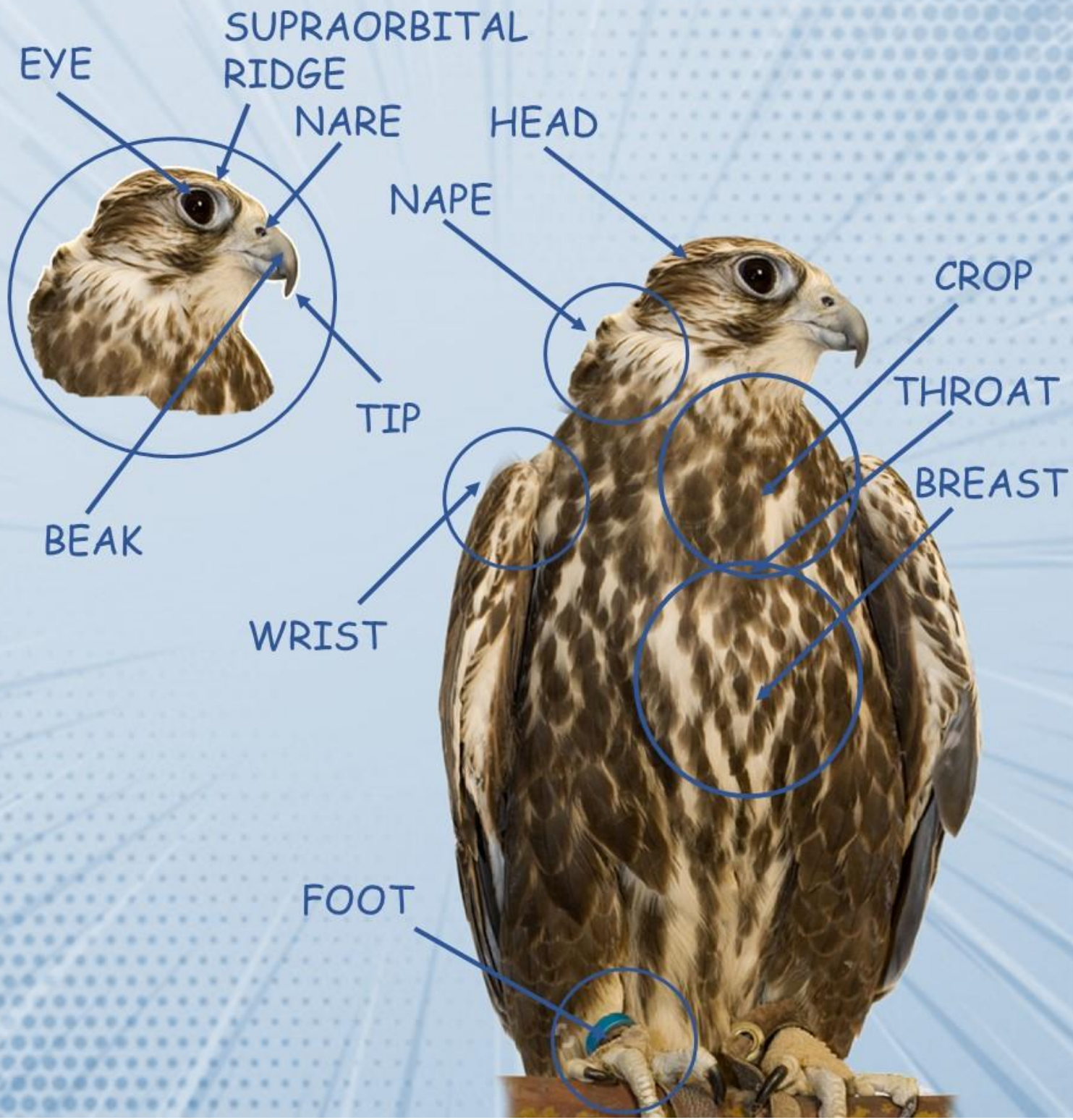
## Birds

- Light, hollow bones
- No teeth and use their beaks to break up food
- Feathers insulate and protect their bodies
- Lay eggs

## Birds of Prey

- Excellent vision
- Eat meat
- Use powerful feet with sharp talons to capture and hold prey
- Powerful, fast, dynamic flyers
- Hooked beak for tearing food
- Top of the food chain
- Also known as "raptors", from the Latin word *rapere* (meaning to seize or take by force)





## Types of birds of prey

- Eagles
- Falcons
- Hawks
- Buzzards
- Kites
- Harriers
- Vultures
- Owls



## GROWING UP

Bird of prey chicks grow up very quickly!

1. Chick hatches
2. Two days old
3. Four weeks old
4. Six weeks old

**HOW FAST DO BABY BIRDS GROW UP?**



Foto: Marcos Cruz (Brazil) -  
Hayabusa Ambiental

# 4 - What do I need to get into falconry?

*In order of importance...*

- 1. The will to hunt** - Falconry, or hawking, is taking quarry in its natural habitat by means of a trained bird of prey. It is not a way of showing off an unusual pet. If you do not hunt with your hawk, then you are a bird handler, not a falconer. In some countries, you might have to take a hunter's or falconer's exam, or get an apprenticeship to become a falconer.
- 2. Suitable territory** - Access to land suitable for the kind of falconry you wish to practice. A mentor can help you with this, and you will learn through your own experience which prey live there. Remember, you must also ask the landowner if you are allowed to hunt on their land.
- 3. Quarry to Hunt** - Thousands of hectares of the most beautiful territory are useless if there is no prey on it.
- 4. An experienced falconer to be your mentor** - Even the most experienced falconer needs help occasionally. A new beginner needs a mentor to get started. It is also useful to join a local falconry club.
- 5. Time** - Hawks and falcons must hunt several times a week, daily even, to keep fit and healthy. Even if you choose not to hunt every day, you still need to spend time with your bird every single day and to prepare fresh meat daily.

**6. A mews** - A place where the hawk or falcon is kept. A roomy chamber with nothing else in it as well as a safe grassy area, fenced-off against cats and other predators. Sizes of mews depends on the size of the bird, so be sure to check this before building any housing.

**7. A food supply for the raptor** - Birds of prey eat only fresh raw meat, complete with fur, feathers and internal organs. You must be able to handle and provide this, and to know where to buy or catch it.

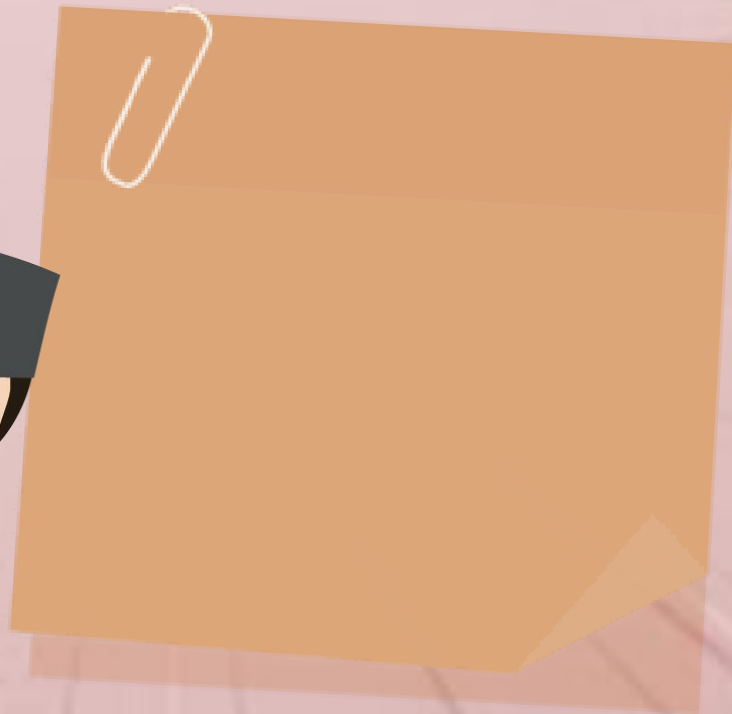
**8. A fridge and freezer** - Keep all animal food away from human food, store fresh or frozen food in a fridge and freezer only for the raptors.

**9. A good set of scales** - Raptors are weighed daily. Weight provides important information about the health and condition of the bird.

**10. Beautiful expensive equipment** - NO. Nice, but not necessary. Some equipment needs to be made by measure of the individual bird, and falconers must learn to make basic equipment themselves.

**11. Money** - As a beginner, you need to prepare, make or buy all the things you need: A chamber or mews, equipment, a few books, food, and the bird itself. Once these are in place, you don't have to spend so much money, as long as equipment is kept in order. You must also consider that your bird might get sick and require veterinary treatment, which can be costly. You need to be prepared to spend money, but it doesn't have to cost so much once you start hunting with the bird.

**12. A bird of prey** - If you are unable to provide any of items 1-9, you should not even consider keeping a bird of prey. You can still enjoy falconry without one as a spectator, however - you can attend club events or go out with someone else and even assist them with flying their hawks.



## 5- Important questions about falconry

### Who is a falconer?

A falconer is someone who hunts wild game with a trained bird of prey. Falconers can acquire a bird of prey from a breeder with legal papers or take one from the wild under license - these practices differ depending on the laws of each country. Once the bird is trained it can be used for hunting, and if the bird has come from the wild it can be possible to release it back to the wild.

### How I can become a falconer?

Have a look at the "For new falconers" section on [www.iaf.org/education](http://www.iaf.org/education). The most important thing of all is for you to find someone to help you.

### Are there falconry laws?

Yes, there are many. Falconry today is practiced in over 80 countries and each one has its own laws. To find out about these you will need to contact either a falconry club or state department in your own country.

## What kind of birds are used for Falconry?



The **Goshawk** is the most versatile hunter you will find and is flown by many, many falconers all over the world. Its prey consists of everything from small-to-medium sized birds such as crows, ducks, partridge and pheasants, to smaller mammals such as rabbits and even hares. In Medieval times, they called it the "Cuisinier" (cook), a reference to its ability to catch food for the table.

Even if the prey notices the Goshawk, it could be too late - it is such a fast hunter and can accelerate and sprint long distances on its short, rounded wings. Many falconers use a dog to flush game for their Goshawk to chase from the fist, and some of these flights can cover long distances! Like the Sparrowhawk, the Goshawk requires a lot of patience to train but is very exciting to hunt with in the field.

The **Sparrowhawk** is the small but mighty cousin of the Goshawk. The male specializes only in small birds, but the female can catch a huge range of birds, from tiny wrens to large pheasants. The Sparrowhawk is the perfect silent hunter, attacking like a shadow in a quick ambush. While excellent hunters and exciting to use for falconry, Sparrowhawks are not suitable as a beginner's bird because they require very careful management.





The **Harris Hawk** is native to southwestern US, Mexico and down through parts of South America. Uniquely for a raptor, it hunts in groups, and its sociable, relaxed and curious nature have made it very popular with falconers.

Its prey consists mainly of mammals such as rabbits and hares, but it sometimes manages to catch birds such as crows and pheasants. It is not as fast as the Goshawk but its ability to soar gives it other hunting opportunities.

The fastest animal on earth is the incredible **Peregrine Falcon** - when it folds its wings and "stoops" vertically in a teardrop shape, it can achieve 360km per hour. Any F1 car is slow compared to it! It takes feathered quarry which it mostly hunts from a very high "pitch" up above.



Peregrines live everywhere in the wild except Antarctica, and have been adored by falconers around the world for thousands of years. A popular way to hunt with them is a "waiting-on" flight at game birds. This style of falconry sees the Peregrine circle high up above the falconer and their dog. When prey is flushed underneath, the Peregrine stoops downwards at high speed and tries to strike from its feet to kill quarry on impact.

The Peregrine might be the second most used bird in falconry (after the Goshawk), but it is the most iconic species associated with the art.





There are only two falcon species that are bigger than the Peregrine - the **Gyr** and the **Saker**. Unlike the Peregrine, these falcons hunt mammals as well as birds in the wild. In falconry, however, Gyrs are flown at larger gamebirds such as sage grouse, pheasants and ducks, while the Saker is most commonly associated with flights at houbara and desert hare. Both species have always been highly prized through history for their size and beauty.

The King of the skies is the **Golden Eagle**. With a wingspan of up to 2.40m, it is an impressive hunter which requires an experienced falconer. It has extremely powerful feet, and the eagle falconers of



Central Asia even hunt wolves with them, both to protect their livestock and to collect pelts for warmth. It preys on mammals like hares, foxes, marmots and even young roe deer or chamois. All eagles require careful handling but with the correct training and conditioning, these intelligent raptors can become very comfortable with their handler and form a closer bond than is possible with smaller falconry species.



With its black-and-white-striped head, orange underbelly and lead-colored back, the **Aplomado Falcon** is one of the most beautiful and unique-looking falcons in the world. They are also one of the most fun to watch hunting.

These long-tailed falcons are incredible fliers and watching one chase prey or dive after an intruder is a sight to see. Aplomados are utilized for the direct pursuit of avian quarry. This type of hunting is some of the most exciting in falconry. These predators have a tremendous range of potential quarry, from sparrows to pheasants. Their extra-long tails make them highly maneuverable in pursuit of quarry, which is why they are so popular among Latin American falconers.

The **Red-Tailed Hawk** is native to North America where it is a popular choice for beginner falconers. However, even experienced falconers both in the US and Europe have had wonderful experiences flying these dynamic buteos.



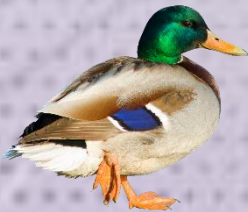
The Red-Tail hunts small rodents, mice, voles, snakes, and even rabbits in the wild, but will hunt just about anything if the opportunity arises. Because of their large size, they are great birds for hunting rabbits as they can get through even deep brush but they also have the physical size to catch hares, jackrabbits, cottontails, ducks, and other large prey.

These are just some of the species used in falconry around the world.  
Falconers categorize all species by wing shape:

- **“Longwings”** (falcons - Peregrine, Saker, Merlin, etc)
- **“Shortwings”** (accipiters - Sparrowhawk, Goshawk, Shikra, etc)
- **“Broadwings”** (buteos & eagles - Harris, Red-Tail, Golden Eagle, etc)



The most common prey species in falconry around the world



HARE  
RABBIT  
QUAIL  
PARTRIDGE  
PHEASANT  
CROW  
DUCK  
STONE CURLEW  
HOUBARA

# 6 - Items of Equipment



HOOD



GLOVE



FALCONRY VEST/  
BAG



RECEIVER



SWIVEL



LEASH



MEWS JESSES



FIELD JESSES



BELLS



ANKLETS



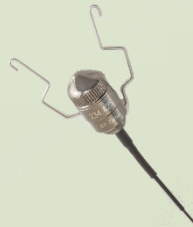
LURE



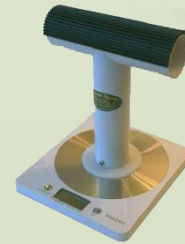
CREANCE



MANGALAH



TRANSMITTER



SCALES



BLOCK PERCH

Some falconers find certain equipment works better for them. Some species have slightly different equipment needs, and so do some falconers. What matters is that the equipment is safe for the bird!



BOW PERCH



We hope you have enjoyed this introduction to falconry. It is the goal of IAF to help young people learn about falconry based on facts without any misinformation.

Passing on our knowledge and passion to the next generation is our duty as falconers, and when you become a falconer, it will be your duty too!

Falconry is a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity - this means it is passed down from father to son, mother to daughter. It is only by sharing our experiences, our lessons and our beautiful birds that we ensure falconry remains alive for future generations.

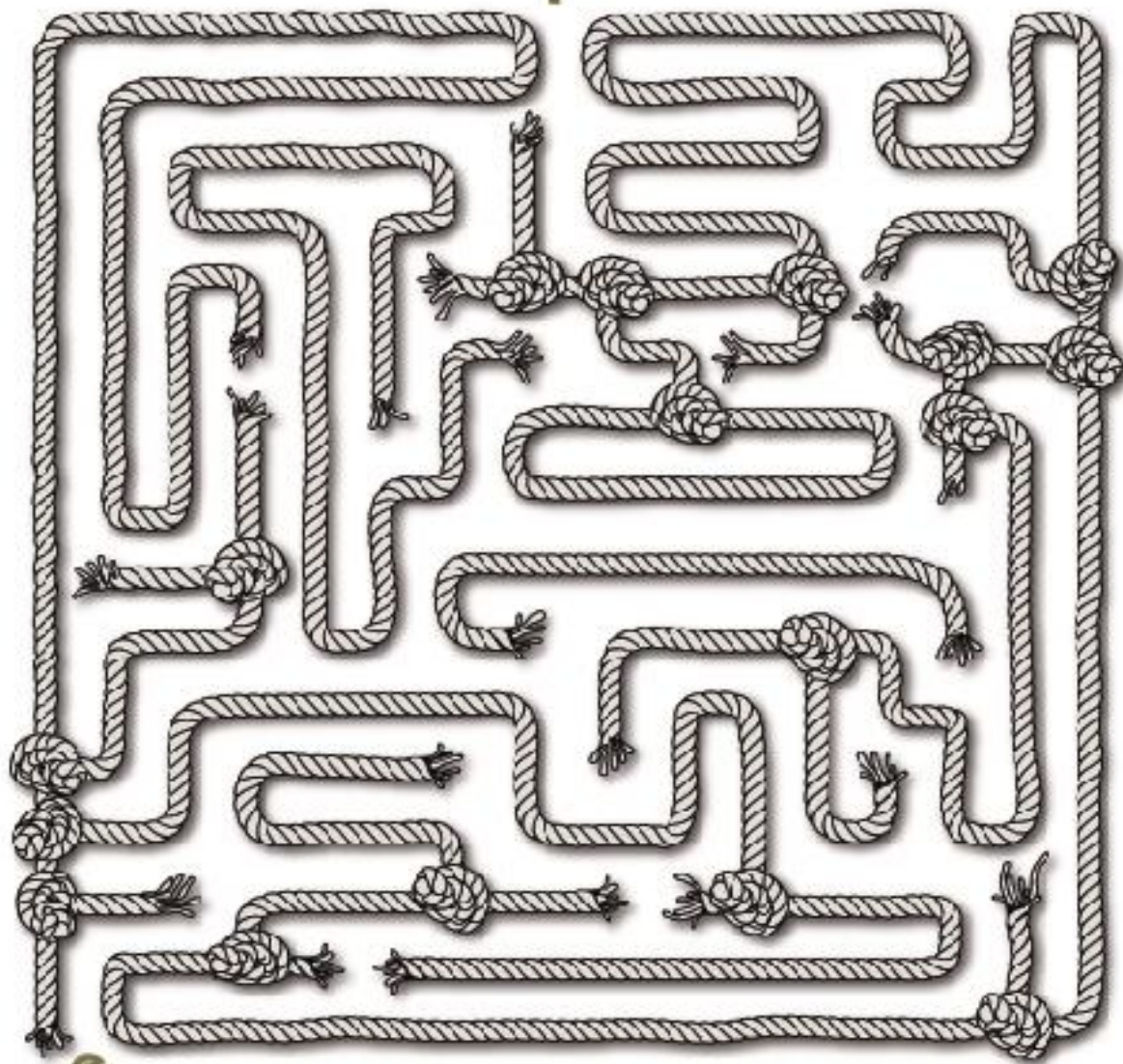
GAMES AND

PUZZLES



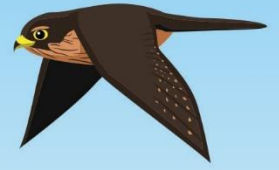


# ***MAZE***



***HELP THE BIRD TO GET TO THE FISH***

# COMPLETE THE BOARD



What is UNESCO's special title for falconry?



# PARTS OF A RAPTOR



1

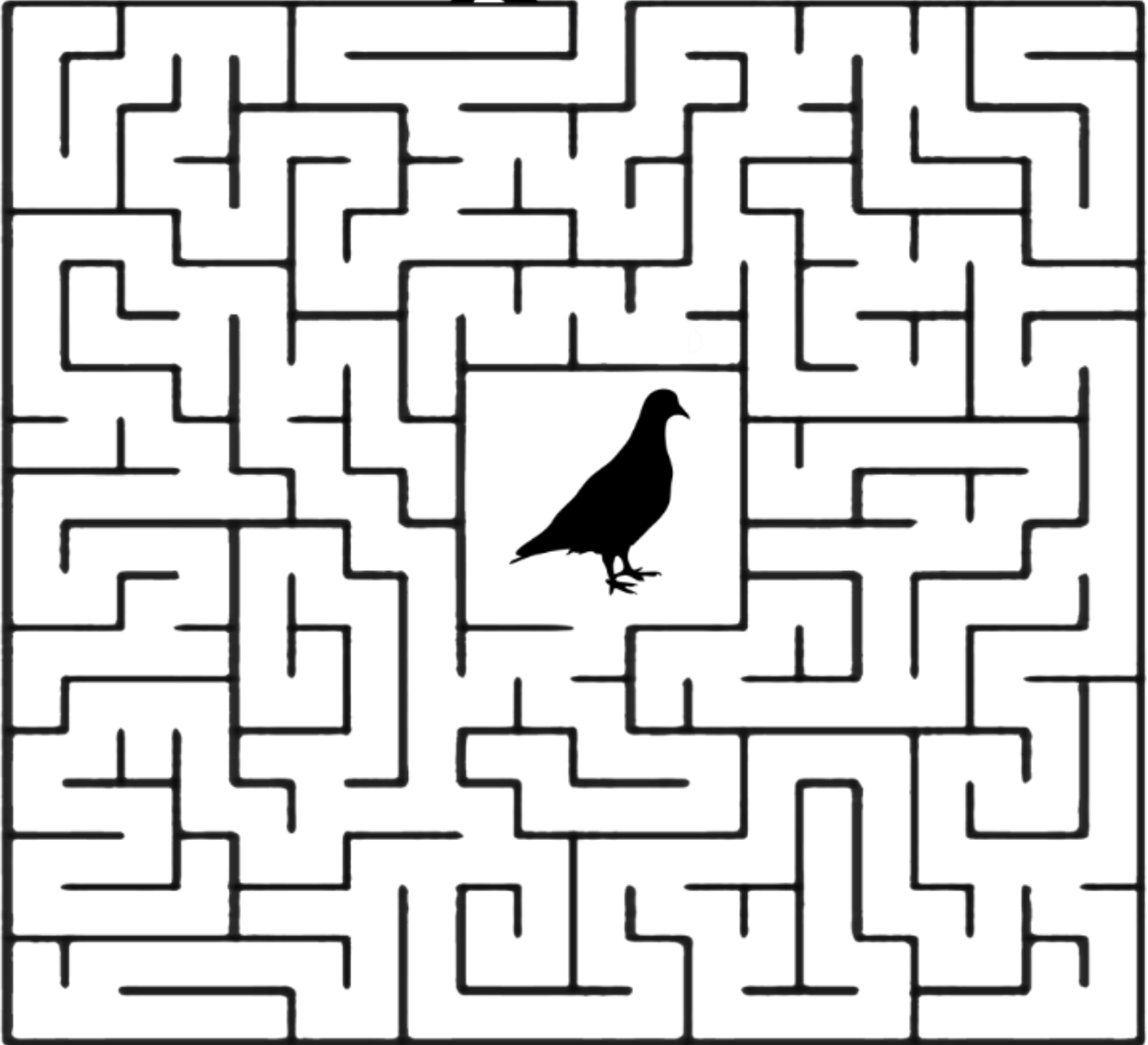
2

3

4

5

6



# Technology is great, but nature is amazing!

Turn those screens off once in a while and go outside play with your friends. Use paint river rocks for doing your own pieces for the board game.





*MENARA  
2019*

Drawing: Anderson Menara

Graphic art: Alessandra Oliveto

**Acknowledgments:**

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