



Saskatchewan Falconers Club

Apprenticeship Program Guidelines

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1 Introduction

Congratulations! The fact that you are reading this probably means that you are about to embark on one of life's most rewarding adventures. To complete your apprenticeship will require you to make a big financial investment as well as a big investment of your time. Falconry is not for everyone, it is for those people who have a love of Nature, in particular a love of Falcons, Hawks and Eagles. Notwithstanding your love of nature you must also be a hunter.

Your Ultimate Goal:

To be a responsible, ethical, sportsmanlike, law abiding falconer that is an informed asset to the present and future of falconry in the Province of Saskatchewan.

Some key points to consider before embarking on this journey.

1. Do I have enough time to look after a bird of prey 365 days a year?
2. Does my work schedule allow me to get and hunt with my bird several days a week during the hunting season?
3. Can I afford it? Do I have enough money to equip my hawk and construct all the facilities that the hawk will require?
4. Is the keeping of "Wild" animals permitted at my residence? Some Towns have byelaws preventing this.
5. Do I really want to hunt and train a bird or do I simply want to keep one as a pet? Falconry is a hunting sport.

Falconry , or keeping birds of prey requires a special permit issued by Fish and Wildlife ENV. and all birds used in falconry in Saskatchewan must be banded. You MUST obtain the permit before you obtain the bird.

2 Objectives and Responsibilities

1. The purpose of the apprenticeship is to provide the beginner with sufficient training and support to enable them to look after their hawk properly, reach a basic level knowledge to enable them to train it leading to flying their hawk free and hunting wild game with it.
2. Once the hawk is flying free it should be hunted at every reasonable opportunity.
3. The apprentice **MUST** familiarize themselves with the legal aspects of falconry and stay within the law. Common sense and acting in a responsible manner will go a long way to setting an apprentice on the right road.

The key stages:

1. **Acquisition**. In this phase the beginning falconer acquires basic knowledge of the Sport through reading, online resources such as web sites and forums can all contribute to forming a basic understanding. The Falconer having decided on what species of hawk he would like to begin with then sets about acquiring all the necessary equipment and building his facilities for his hawk. Only when this has all been done to the satisfaction of the Club will the Club sponsor an apprentice for a hawk.
2. **Handling and Basic Training**. In this phase the Apprentice having been granted his first Permit by the Provincial Government obtains his first Hawk. Taking a strictly hands on approach and under the guidance of the mentor the Apprentice will equip his hawk with all the necessary gear. Once that is done the Apprentice learns the basics of training his hawk and how to handle and feed it.
3. **Flying and Hunting**. Once the basic training is complete, of the *hawk and falconer*, they will be ready for their first free flights, which will lead onto the Sport itself – that of hunting wild quarry with a trained hawk in its natural environment.

Stage 1. Acquisition.

Gather as much information as you can from as many different sources before you begin. There are many excellent books out there to be read, videos to watch, Forums to join on the internet a whole host of resources. All this will help you to form a realistic idea of what you are hoping to achieve. Many of the "How to..." books contain further reading and equipment lists. Visiting the Falconry Suppliers on the internet and viewing what they have on offer will put sense to words like jesses, anklets and creance as well as giving you an idea of what things cost. Some suppliers offer beginners kits which will contain basic equipment for that first hawk. If you are convinced you would like to pursue the sport of falconry now is the time to complete the application form for the SFC and send it off with your money!.

Many falconers like to make their own equipment this is great BUT make sure that what you are making is good enough for the task at hand. A badly made anklet around a hawk's leg can cause injury leading to infection and possibly death. So whatever you make must be of the right standard to avoid disaster. Hawks are physically fragile. Unlike mammals their immune system is extremely weak particularly during the first year of life.

The most important thing you need to acquire after your initial research is an experienced Mentor to help you through your apprenticeship. That Mentor will be giving up a lot of valuable time to help you so it is imperative that you act on his advice. He is not Mentoring you for any other reason than he wants you to succeed. He will help you make a decision about what hawk you should keep in your first few seasons and between you make a decision that will be appropriate to where you live and what quarry is available to hunt. The Club can help you find a Mentor.

Look carefully at the land that you are hoping to fly your bird over and make sure that permission to hunt there will be available to you. Respect other people's hunting grounds if someone has been hunting there for years already they may not be too pleased to find themselves sharing it with someone else.

The next thing to consider is the facilities which you will need to build or have built to house your hawks. If you are building from scratch it is better to build bigger now than later. Each species of hawk has its own peculiar requirements but a dedicated building or "mews" is to be preferred. Hawks like a clean dust free environment to sleep or go when the weather is bad, and they need a safe place to "weather" outside protected from predators, and shelter from extremes of weather by day. Again there are lots of books out there that can help you with a design for a Mews and so will your Mentor. You need to create an environment in which your hawk will thrive, not just survive. The other consideration is where will you house your hawk during the close season? A well constructed "Skylight Seclusion Aviary" is preferred by many falconers for the annual down time.

Once you have all these things in place: your choice of Hawk, your equipment (furniture), your facilities constructed, and have acquired a basic level of knowledge to the satisfaction of your mentor then you can think about applying for a Falconry permit. Once you have your permit you can acquire your hawk - you then move into the next stage.

Falconry Equipment Checklist

- Food Supply - a varied diet of whole food (e.g. quail, rodents, chicken poults, etc)
 - vitamin supplements
- Bath Pan - suitable size and material
- Aylmeri Anklets and Jesses
 - equipment required (2 piece grommets, pliers)
 - appropriate leather types (*Kangaroo leather is recommended*)
 - non-toxic jess ointments to keep leather supple and strong
- Swivels - falconry swivels
 - should have at least two swivels
- Leashes - have at least two suitable leashes of appropriate strength and length
- Falconry Bells - have at least two pairs of bells
- Glove - should incorporate a safety snap to secure raptor
- Perch - for hawks use a simple bow design incorporating a strong, lightweight, closed ring for securing leash
 - for falcons use a block perch with appropriate closed leash ring.
 - suitable perching surface materials.
 - indoor perch designs and considerations
- Weigh Scales - triple beam or counter balance type or electronic
 - with a properly mounted perch
- Lures -2 Lures
- Hoods- properly fitting hoods and a smooth hooding technique are important.
 - **have a spare hood**
- Giant Hood - designs, travel perches if bird hooded, other travel considerations
- Whistle - plastic/no pea - for cold weather conditions
- Creance - suitable materials - strength, weight, and length considerations
- Bag or Vest - considerations/field items required
- I.D. Tags - assist in the location of lost birds/suppliers
- Telemetry - essential for locating a lost hawk required under Code of Conduct
- Provincial Hunting Permit – **Have you passed the Hunter Safety Course?** If not you will need to take the course before you can apply for a Hunting Permit

- Sponsor -Get fixed up with a Sponsor and sign the Sponsorship Agreement.
- Log Book -A book to record your hawks weight in and record any notable events. (You will be weighing your bird daily during training and flying.)

Handling and Basic Training.

So now you have obtained your Falconry Apprentice Permit, you have all your equipment, a supply of food and a willing Sponsor to help you through the next few weeks.

In consultation with your sponsor, get a healthy, first year, non-imprinted, untrained bird. The reason for these recommendations is to ensure you get the most out of your apprenticeship. Very little is learned by working with a bird that is a human imprint or a bird that has been manned by someone else.

The same applies to a bird that is not healthy. Discuss the potential bird with your sponsor beforehand

Manning

Manning starts from the moment you get the bird and is an ongoing process. Socialization is another term synonymous with manning, and is associated with the initial period of time where you get the bird comfortable with its new surroundings and with you. Discuss techniques in detail with your sponsor. This can sometimes be a difficult stage that will test your resolve, but don't give up or get discouraged! Listen to your sponsor's advice, that's what they are for. During this period you may need to re-read sections of books that talk about manning techniques. If you plan to hunt with dogs this is also the time to introduce your bird to your dog(s).

Keep your bird "feather perfect"!

One of the hallmarks of a good falconer is the physical condition and the feather of his bird. Peak physical condition and good feather can only be achieved by vigilant attention to detail with respect to housing, equipment, and good quality food. When you first get your bird take several photographs as a reminder of the condition of the bird when you received it. Pay attention to a good picture of the bird's profile. Chances are that your bird's beak will be perfect when you receive it and that picture can be your guide to keeping its beak in shape.

Early Training

Once your bird is comfortable with you and you are starting to understand weight control, it is time to prepare for free flight. The early training is the interim step between manning and free flight where you take your bird outside and fly her on a creance. It is a good idea to have your sponsor oversee this exercise several times. He or she will provide crucial feedback about your handling techniques as well as interpreting the bird's response to you. Often to a novice it seems the bird is responding well and therefore must be "keen", but the sponsor, having had many years of experience, is able to recognize that the bird may not be as keen as it appears. This is not much of an issue when flying the bird on creance, but it can make

the difference between keeping and losing your bird when the time for free flight arrives. During this time period:

1. Review your logbook entries and discuss them with your sponsor.
2. Closely monitor the overall health and condition of your bird.
3. Have your sponsor oversee your bird perform on the creance, and follow any recommendations offered.
4. Understand the difference between 'keenness' and 'weight'.
5. Discuss preparation for free flight and use of telemetry.

Flying and Hunting.

Now that you have become familiar with your bird's response on a creance it is time to remove the swivel and set her free to fly. There are various exercises you can do with your bird at this stage that will help her get into hunting condition. This is the time where you introduce the lure, kite, and any other techniques that aid the bird's physical condition and reinforce your relationship as her hunting companion. Review your logbook entries and discuss them with your sponsor.



1. Observe the bird's flight and discuss physical conditioning. Introduce exercises that build the bird's strength and endurance, and relationship to you.
2. Review safety issues when free flying the bird (roadways, hydro wires, other raptors or predators, etc.).

3. Have a strategy in place in the event your bird becomes lost or injured. Your sponsor will help you with this. Although it is not nice to think about, you need to know what to do if this does happen.
4. Introduce the bird to live game in a timely manner. Your sponsor will again be able to guide you through this process. Your bird will need some early successes in order to build confidence in his ability to catch wild quarry.
5. This is also the stage where in-field instruction with your sponsor will commence.



Male Redtailed Hawk on cotton tail rabbit.

Sources of Equipment

Northwoods Falconry Equipment
Brad Woods
Washington, USA
www.northwoodsfalconry.com

Mikes Falconry Equipment
www.mikesfalconry.com

Recomended Falconry Books

- **"Apprentice Manual"** California Hawking Club
Western Sporting
PO Box 939, 18 Kooi Road
Ranchester, Wyoming 82839-0939
Tel: (307) 672-0445
www.westernsporting.com

- **"Understanding the Bird of Prey"**
Dr. Nick Fox, 1995
Western Sporting
PO Box 939, 18 Kooi Road
Ranchester, Wyoming 82839-0939
Tel: (307) 672-0445
www.westernsporting.com

- **"Apprentice Study Guide"** California Hawking Club
F.W. Holderman editor
Western Sporting
PO Box 939, 18 Kooi Road
Ranchester, Wyoming 82839-0939
Tel: (307) 672-0445
www.westernsporting.com

- **"The Falconer's Apprentice - A Guide to Training the Passage Red-Tailed Hawk"**
Oakes, William C. 1994,
Eagle Wing Publishing
Post Office Box 434
Roy, Utah 84067-0434
Telephone # (801) 731-7416

- **"Falconry Equipment"**, Kimsey and Hodge 1992,
Kimsey Hodge Publications
7815 Encinita

Houston, Texas 77083

- **"Medical Management of Birds of Prey"**, P. Redig 1993

The Raptor Centre University of Minnesota
1920 Fitch Ave.
St. Paul, MN, 55108

- **"North American Falconry and Hunting Hawks"**

Beebe and Webster
Western Sporting
PO Box 939, 18 Kooi Road
Ranchester, Wyoming 82839-0939
Tel: (307) 672-0445
www.westernsporting.com

- **"The Compleat Falconer"** F.L. Beebe 1992

Hancock House Publishers
19313 Zero Ave.
Surrey, British Columbia V3S 5J9

- **"Gamehawking...At Its Very Best"** Webster 1988

C/O Windsong Press
P.O. Box 1484
Denver, Colorado 80201

- **"The Hunting Falcon"** Haak, 1992

also from Hancock House

- **"Veterinary Aspects of Captive Birds of Prey"** Cooper, J. E. 1985

Standfast Press, The Old Rectory Charington,
Tetbury, Gloucestershire

Apprenticeship Agreement.

Sponsors

“As a Falconry Sponsor, I will be:

Available, to my apprentice for support and assistance whenever needed.

Attentive, to the progress of my apprentice’s hawk.

Alert, to the activities of my apprentice, to ensure they are ethical, legal, and humane.

Active, in the discovery and correction of problems and situations which might harm my apprentice’s hawk, the legal sport of falconry, or the public’s perception of falconry, and

Accountable, for the health and well-being of my apprentice’s hawk.”

I have read and understood these Apprenticeship guidelines and agree to be bound by them.

Signed..... Sponsor.

Name.....

Dated...../...../.....

Apprentices

“As a Falconer’s Apprentice, I will be:

Legal, following all local, provincial, and federal laws.

Ethical, in my treatment of land owners, property, habitat, raptors, wildlife, and other falconers.

Accountable, for the health and safety of my hawk, and for flying her at wild game.

Supportive, of organizations that promote the conservation of habitat and wildlife, and

Humane, in my treatment of all animals.”

I have read and understood these Apprenticeship guidelines and agree to be bound by them.

Signed.....Apprentice Member.

Name.....

Dated...../...../.....



