



Apprentice Overview

Falconry, once known as the “Sport of Kings”, was a means of putting food on a table before the invention of bow and firearms. Today, falconry is defined as a legalized hunting sport in which we are permitted to utilize raptors, (protected species and a natural resource), to pursue wild quarry in its natural surroundings. This is why modern day falconry is the most regulated sport in the United States. To elaborate, we are a gray area within the law, we are allowed to take raptors (protected species) from the wild but we do not dispatch them we use them as our hunting tool.

All species of migratory birds which includes raptors, are protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act, and are therefore governed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). These two acts give the USFWS regulating authority over raptors and falconry regulations which supersede those of individual States. Because of this, State falconry regulations must meet or exceed USFWS standards and may be more strict but not less lenient than those of the USFWS.

1. Falconry is not just a sport; it is a way of life. For those of you who are interested in becoming a permitted falconer, we suggest that you talk to members of the falconry community and go on a few hunts with different falconers to experience firsthand what the demands of the sport are and to see the diversity of the art of falconry and its practitioners. Please read the North American Falconers Association code of ethics <http://www.n-a-f-a.com/Ethics.htm> . These ethics should be heavily weighed when deciding whether or not to practice the sport.

2. If you decide that falconry is a sport you wish to pursue, you must first have or obtain a hunting license. Falconers are governed by the same Florida seasons and bag limits as both, bow and firearm hunters.

3. You will also need to find a sponsor (a General or Master Falconer), who is willing to teach you during your two year, mandatory apprenticeship. Both the sponsor and the potential apprentice must be comfortable working with each other for this relationship to be a success. We highly recommend that you choose a sponsor that lives no more than an hour away from you. The Federal and Florida State regulations mandate that you submit a letter from your sponsor, to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC), when you get started.

We have posted the Federal and Florida State Falconry regulations on this site which you must know and which contain a list of equipment you must have as well as raptor housing regulations. We have also provided you with a list of recommended reading; that covers the topics you will be tested on by the State before you are issued a permit. You must pass this all encompassing exam with 80% or better.

4. While you are preparing for the exam, you can simultaneously be making and acquiring the necessary equipment, which includes a way of safely transporting raptors from home to field.

5. Choosing your first bird, how it will be acquired, housing and weathering yard designs are decisions that your sponsor will help you make.

6. When your sponsor deems you ready, you may then file your permit application with the State and take the exam. Once you have passed the exam the State will inspect your equipment and facilities. If you and your sponsor have each done their part, you will be issued your first permit.

The Florida Hawking Fraternity will assist you in any way possible and wishes you the best of luck!