

Alberta Gamehawking Club Apprenticeship Program

Falconry is the sport of hunting wild game with a trained bird of prey. It is an ancient art that has captivated people for thousands of years in many cultures worldwide. It offers unparalleled opportunities to experience the beauty, power and intensity that raptors embody, but it is not easy or simple. In fact, the sport requires a level of dedication and commitment that is unfamiliar to most people. Not surprisingly the number of Alberta falconers is relatively small.

The Alberta Gamehawking Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the art and practice of falconry, and the raptors that it employs. The requirement for novice falconers to successfully complete an apprenticeship period is a requirement of almost all regulatory jurisdictions in North America. We support this requirement and believe that an effective apprenticeship program is essential to the long-term welfare of falconry.

The objective of the apprenticeship program is to produce high-quality falconers that are an asset to the sport and the wildlife on which it depends. The purpose of this document is to set reasonable expectations for both the apprentice and the sponsor.

The success of the apprenticeship program depends on the commitment of both sponsor and apprentice, and this commitment should not be taken for granted by either party. We believe that these guidelines will help to maximize the benefits of the apprenticeship program not only for the apprentice, but also for the falconry community as a whole.

Supporting and facilitating an effective apprenticeship program is an important function of the Alberta Gamehawking Club, as it promotes the care, welfare and responsible training of falconry birds.

The Alberta Gamehawking Club recognizes 2 categories of falconers - The apprentice falconer who is new to the sport and wishes to learn the art of falconry and the Regular falconer who is experienced in the sport.

Responsibilities of Apprentice

Prior to obtaining a falconry bird, the apprentice shall:

1. Be prepared to put the welfare of any raptor in his or her possession first and foremost at all times.
2. Have read at least two modern texts on falconry and have a basic understanding of the sport.
3. Be familiar with all Federal and Provincial Regulations pertaining to falconry.
4. Secure a relationship with a sponsor who agrees to this undertaking for the entirety of the apprenticeship period. The Alberta Gamehawking Club may be able to assist if you are having trouble locating a sponsor. The apprentice must agree to follow advice received from the sponsor.
5. Determine with your sponsor which species of raptor would be suitable as a first bird.

An apprentice must capture and train a native passage bird, the species of which is to be approved by the sponsor.

Any raptor used for the apprenticeship should be an untrained bird. Very little is learned by flying someone else's bird! Imprinted and/or previously trained raptors are not suitable.

In order to successfully complete the apprenticeship requirements, a mastery of basic falconry techniques must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of your sponsor. This includes hunting with your bird in several unaided flush and chase situations at wild quarry.

An apprenticeship period of at least 24 months is required. However, a sponsor is not required to approve the apprentice for regular falconer status until he or she feels the apprentice has adequately proved his or her falconry competence, whether or not the 24-month period has been completed.

A Message for the Sponsor:

Although there is no legal requirement for you to be a sponsor, as an experienced falconer you have the privilege and responsibility to provide guidance and leadership to novice individuals who exhibit a genuine interest in pursuing the sport of falconry. This responsibility is a part of the tradition of falconry that stretches back through the ages. In order to continue this tradition and uphold the highest possible standard of falconry, the decision to take on an apprentice is one to be made carefully and sincerely.

The welfare of raptors that come into the possession of a novice, the level of proficiency and ethics of falconry practiced, public perception of falconry, and the reputation of the AGC and falconers in general are the main issues at stake with respect to your commitment as a sponsor. Passing on the values and skills that are part of quality falconry is the best way to ensure that falconry continues to be a legitimate and respected field sport in the Province of Alberta.

If you wish to become an apprentice falconer and understand the concept of a falconry apprenticeship you can, by signing this document enter into an apprenticeship agreement with a regular falconer. A copy of this agreement must then be sent to the Alberta Gamehawking Club

Apprentice

Sponsor

Date

Date

On completion of the apprenticeship period the apprentice will be presented with a card signifying he or she has completed a falconry apprenticeship program and is recognized as a regular falconer.