

FROM THE FIELD, MEW & BREEDING CHAMBER

REVIEW: PATRICK MOREL. *THE ART OF FALCONRY (ENGLISH EDITION)*, 2016

TEXT BY S. KENT CARNEY; COVER ART COURTESY OF MEDINA PUBLISHING



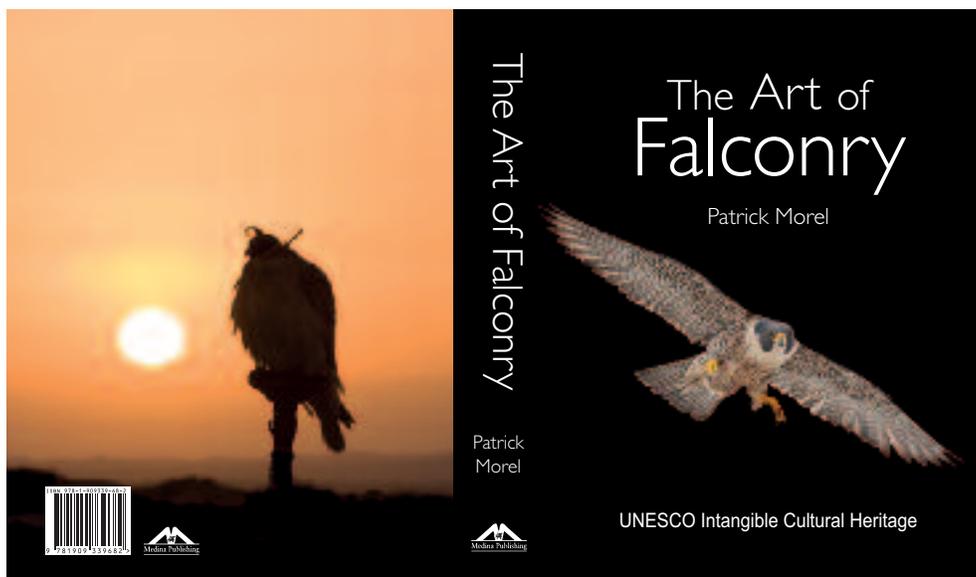
PATRICK MOREL is renowned worldwide as a Master Falconer. He has an innate sense of hunting, is a modest expert on 'grande quiete' pointing dogs (particularly English pointers) and is himself a fine shot.

He is the former President of the Belgian Falconers Association (Club Marie de Bourgogne), and was previously President of the International Association for Falconry when he was instrumental in bringing together 60 countries which practice falconry.

Patrick's idea and initiative and the teamwork of a group of equally passionate experts led to the official classification of falconry as a 'living cultural heritage' during the General Assembly of UNESCO on 16 November 2010.

The French edition of the *Art of Falconry*, published in 2013, has been a bestseller and recognized as the best hunting book published in France.

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The Art of Falconry represents a milestone in falconry: the sport, quite unique in scope, style and content. It presents falconry in theory and in practice, celebrating it as both an art form and a living cultural heritage. Far from being merely another 'how-to' book, however, it takes the reader into the field with contributions from experts in all branches of the sport, and is lavishly illustrated with stunning photographs and artwork. It was the first new practical falconry treatise in the French language since the 1940s, and now this English edition brings a fresh perspective to the English-speaking falconer. The book is further enhanced through contributions from a number of internationally renowned authorities, including British, American and South African falconers and authors.

The author's vast falconry experience, combined with that of his fellow contributors, make this volume knowledge-beary, yet light and entertaining in style. It covers all aspects of modern falconry, from the traditions that shaped the sport we know today to its underpinning ethics and philosophy as it continues to evolve in the 21st century. It takes the reader around the globe in search of ultimate quarry species, relating methods and motives through the hawk's experiences of those who seek the most challenging flights in their art. Scottish red grouse and Belgian cross-bushes, hawking with gyrfalcons and takers, wood pigeon hawking with peregrines and goshawks, sand grouse, snipe and sage grouse with high-flying falcons: this book gives the falconer pride in the sport's traditions and enthusiasm for the future development and evolution of this living heritage.

With this version of his 2013, award-winning book ("best new title on field sports in French in 2014"), Belgian falconer Patrick Morel has opened the door for we English-speakers into his many years of experience in the practice of the sport. This edition, however, is not simply a translated reprinting of the original text. It is a revised volume, artfully accompanied with stunning illustrations.

More than a "how-to" book, one fears this work may be passed over by those new to the sport upon finding much on feather nomenclature but only five lines describing the round perch. True, there are basic descriptions of equipment and biology (where Patrick's great affection for the peregrine and gyrfalcon become obvious). Indeed, some of his "basics" go beyond what is commonly found in contemporary English language writings, others not so much so. But the author does not simply approach the place and details of such as the round perch. He offers instead an examination of the place and details of the art of falconry, its essence and the ethics and esthetics of its subject: field (hunting) falconry. It is in that aspect that the true value of this work shines.

It is to the benefit of us all that one so experienced as Patrick has chosen to share with us understanding gained over a lifetime hunting with raptors. A consummate master falconer in every sense, Patrick is esteemed by his peers. Formerly president of Belgium's Club Marie de Bourgogne and later secretary and then president of the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, the current president of that organization very rightly describes Patrick as a true servant to world falconry. Patrick has brought to bear his great depth of insight into its practice in helping guide the political efforts needed to ensure that falconers can continue to take to the field. He now shares that insight on the pages of this finely produced book.

Patrick, and indeed all of us, is fortunate in his selection of David Horobin to translate the text. David has preserved the intimate flavor of Patrick's original prose, though some of the terminology defies translation or may appear quaint in English. French falconry vocabulary is far more extensive and explicit than that in English. This is nowhere more evident than in Patrick's discussion on the numbering and naming of the birds' principal feathers. Re-

See REVIEW on Page 45

REVIEW

Continued from Page 44

member, too, David's is British, not American, English.

We are fortunate, too, that he has enlisted others in describing aspects of the sport in which they are versed. None fits that description better than his long-time hunting partner Gilles Nortier. Patrick speculates that Gilles' contributed chapter on "Reflections on the Philosophy and Ethics of Falconry" is perhaps the best in the volume. With the perspective of years of flying, the falconer will realize that Gilles' words truly reflect the title of his chapter—the meaning of the sport; would that he were still with us.

This book will be controversial, it is a falconry book after all. There are things unsaid that, to some, should have been said, things that could have been left out, and things with which to disagree. But consider the readership to which this volume is addressed. Falconers are great critics but we are often overly enthralled with our own opinions. To improve our understanding of the sport we must at least be able to consider a variety of advice, especially good advice. In the present instance, with experience far beyond most readers, Patrick gives us much from which to learn. And delving into his recollections,

from trapping his first peregrine to witnessing the intricacies of sandgrouse hawking in Morocco, his pen reflects his personal enthusiasm for all that is falconry.

Despite an old cliché, this volume truly belongs on the bookshelf of every falconer. If you need the dimensions of a round perch, look elsewhere, but in the meantime avail yourself of this volume. Even if your time in falconry has yet to let the experience and philosophy on these pages move you, put the book on the proverbial shelf. Years hence you will come to recognize its value: experience, insight, and wisdom, beautifully presented.

Patrick Morel. *The Art of Falconry*. (English edition): Surbiton, Surrey (UK), Medina Publishing, Ltd., 2016. 8 x 11 inches, 464 pages, 233 color illustrations. The publisher of Mr. Morel's book has kindly extended a 30% discount to NAFA members who go to their website, www.casemateipm.com and use the discount code HAWKCHALK. The book retails for \$50, so with the discount, it would be \$35 plus shipping.

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