



Classical Falconry

A Treatise on Rook & Crow Hawking

Nick Fox / Published by Hancock House, ISBN 0-88839-548-5

Reviewed by Paul Manning

As the sub-title makes clear, this is a very detailed analysis of hunting Rooks and Crows with Falcons. This book is essentially the experiences

of Nick Fox, gained through managing the Northumberland Crow Falcons.

Though covering all corvids, Crows are the primary quarry, as they can provide the ultimate objective, the elusive but spectacular 'Le haut vol', 'High flight' in which both falcon and its prey climb high into the sky, striving for aerial supremacy.

This form of hunting requires vast areas of relatively open terrain and is undertaken from both cars and from horseback. Everything that can and does effect the hunt is covered here in detail. From selecting land, gaining landowners permission, topography, wind speed and direction the quarry and their flight styles, selecting and training the falcons, weight management and their fitness and motivation. There is a section on the horses, their care and specialised training, together with an extensive insight into the establishment, management, equipment and logistics involved in bringing together the NCF.

Not many of us will ever have the opportunity to experience this branch of falconry. Given the huge area required and massive logistical operation and the specific flight style, you may feel that this form of hunting could never be aspired to; therefore this book is of little relevance or interest to you.

How wrong you would be. This book is a fantastic read and very effectively conveys an approach to falconry that can and should be adopted, regardless of which bird you fly or what land you have

available. The author's attention to detail and thirst for knowledge I found inspiring, not humbling. It renews ones desire to be the very best you can be. To strive to produce the very best hunting partner in whichever branch of falconry you practice.

At one point, he observes that "Falconry is like a tapestry, it is all little stitches. Only when you stand back does it make a picture". To extend the analogy; "The quality of a tapestry is judged, by the density of the weave". Nick Fox looks at every tiny detail that may impact on his sport, so as to understand and improve each one in turn. He approaches them all with equal fervour and when it does all come together it must surely produce a picture of the highest quality.

However, the detail alone cannot convey the pleasure that falconry brings. Here he manages to combine both.

It is beautifully presented, with a wealth of supporting photographs. Charming and informative sketches are used to introduce or illuminate the information and where necessary, technical descriptions in the text are further illustrated by clear charts or diagrams. The result is that the reader is never left unsure about a specific point.

An additional pleasure is that many sub headings or fresh observations are augmented by a relevant passage of poetry or prose, taken from the 'golden age of falconry'. These cleverly establish a poignant link between the thoughts and feelings of the contemporary falconer with that of our illustrious forebears. The effect is to make the reader (if a falconer) feel a part of something very special. I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to any falconer.