

The main orientation of the author, however, is not in the foregoing direction. Regardless of the cause or causes of the decline of the Peregrine, it is quite possible that in the future birds directly from the wild will not be available for falconry. For this reason the author initiated his work on the domestication of the Peregrine in cooperation with other interested individuals.

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Egg-laying by Captive Raptors

Although falconers have handled and flown Peregrines for some two thousand years, the husbandry of the species does not seem to have been attempted until modern times. Most of the traditional procedures of handling and caring for hawks and falcons have mitigated against any attempt by the birds to reproduce once removed from the wild population. Possibly foremost among these is the traditional concept of capturing birds for falconry only after they can fly well and have learned to hunt. Such birds, while they can be trained rather easily and tamed to a limited degree, are yet never entirely relaxed in the semi-captive situation. Similarly, when nestlings (known to falconers as eyasses) were taken, the traditional methods of keeping these were no better oriented toward reproduction than were those of the wild-caught birds. They were always taken when nearly ready to fly and then made as much like the wild-caught birds as possible by a period of free-flying known as "hack." These traditions have led to a further tradition that a high incidence of loss is to be expected, and comparatively few eyas birds have been kept long enough to reach reproductive age. Fewer yet of these have had any access to natural mates. Traditional falconry has been strongly oriented toward the use of the females. The males, mostly because of their smaller size, received comparatively little attention and were seldom taken if females were available.