



Using Falcons for Hunting

By Lisa Smith

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Have you ever considered falconry for your hunting? For those not in the know about this thousand-year-old sport, it's the use of a raptor (a trained bird of prey) in the hunting of wild quarry in its natural habitat. Who needs a noisy gun when you got something silent and deadly to catch dinner? As far back as 772 BC, ancient dudes used falcons for hunting in Mesopotamia, or in Mongolia and China. It was probably introduced to Europe around AD 400 by invading Huns and was considered a sport among the nobility during medieval times. The [practice spread to North America \(http://www.n-a-f-a.com/General_History.htm\)](http://www.n-a-f-a.com/General_History.htm) in the early 1900s thanks to an article in [National Geographic \(http://www.nationalgeographic.com/\)](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/). There are a few categories of raptors (isn't that just the coolest word?) used in falconry: Broadwings, Longwings, and Shortwings. Within the Broadwings category, under the genus *Buteo*, are the [Harris's Hawk \(http://www.peregrinefund.org/subsites/explore-raptors-2001/hawks/harrishk.html\)](http://www.peregrinefund.org/subsites/explore-raptors-2001/hawks/harrishk.html) and [Red-tailed Hawk \(http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/red-tailed-hawk/\)](http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/red-tailed-hawk/). For rabbit or hare, and birds, the Harris's Hawk is used worldwide and is praised for its temperament and ability (a good thing when you're

handling a bird that could possibly tear you to shreds). For beginners in North America, only the Red-tailed Hawk — excellent for hunting rabbits, hares, and squirrels; and even geese, ducks, pheasants, and wild turkeys — is permitted during apprenticeship. Within the Longwings category, under the genus *Falco*, is the majestic [Peregrine Falcon](#) (<http://web.archive.org/web/20080416195055/http://www.fws.gov/endangered/recovery/peregrine/QandA.html>), a raptor that has been clocked at wicked speeds of over 200 mph during a high speed dive, considered the fastest member of the animal kingdom. For the Shortwings category, under the genus *Accipiter*, you have the [Goshawk](#) (http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Goshawk/lifehistory/ac), which has been used in falconry for hundreds of years capable of capturing a host of birds and mammals. So, are you convinced about falconry? Ready to run out and get a raptor or two? Well, hold off for a quick minute because there are some things you definitely need to know before you buy, which will be covered in another article.

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