



## Arizona's Raptor Experience, LLC

January 2017

~Newsletter~

*Greetings from Chino Valley*

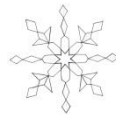
*and*

*Happy New Year!*

*We hope you enjoyed the holiday season and that you've had a great start to 2017. We're pleased to report that all the birds are robust and healthy. The big news here is that Leopold (Leo) the Bald Eagle is coming along nicely and we hope to have him out for programs within the next month or two – stay tuned!*

*In this issue we focus on the historical use of Eagle Owls in falconry and on the unbecoming historical names of the Northern Goshawk. We hope you enjoy it!*

*If you'd like to suggest a topic for the newsletter or submit a photo for ID, please let us know!*



*Mark your  
calendar!*

*Upcoming  
program:*

**Watters Garden  
Center**

WattersGardenCenter.com

*Prescott, AZ*

**Saturday,**

**March 4<sup>th</sup>**

*9:30 a.m.*





Andromeda – photo by Gayle Lucci

### ***The Eurasian Eagle Owl...Decoy and Lure in Old World Falconry***

Historically referred to as the Great Owl, the Eurasian Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*) is one of the largest owls in the world. Occupying a variety of habitat types including wooded and grassy areas and even desert environments, they can be found from sea level to 15,400 feet (4700 m).

Their distribution across Eurasia extends from Spain to northern Japan and into North Africa. Throughout this extensive area they are at the top of their food chain, taking over 250 documented prey types, including other owls and diurnal raptors.

There are 14 sub-species of Eagle Owls, including a small breeding population in the UK that is thought to have originated from escaped falconry birds.

Today, Eurasian Eagle Owls are trained to take quarry as is their close relative the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) in North America. In the past, there was no traditional use of Eagle Owls in falconry, except as a decoy or a lure.

According to *The Encyclopedia of Falconry* by Adrian Walker, Eagle Owls were once used by English falconers as a decoy to attract quarry for their falcons when rook-hawking. The owl would be jessed and tethered to a high perch in the open, where it would be mobbed by local birds including Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*) which are related to Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) and Ravens (*Corvus corax*). The Rooks would be so distracted by the presence of the owl; they would not notice the falconer and his falcon moving in for the kill!

Old World falconers also used Eagle Owls as a lure when kite-hawking (which is no longer practiced today). The Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) a beautiful and graceful bird of prey, was hunted by falconers with Gyrfalcons (*Falco rusticolus*), Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) and sometimes Saker Falcons (*Falco cherrug*). The Kite would be lured by an Eagle Owl let loose to fly with a fox brush (tail) tethered to its legs, which would inhibit flight but appear as a target for the kite that would attempt to steal its prey. Once in pursuit of the owl, falconers would release their falcons on the Kite. The allure of kite-hawking was the impressive flight of the falcons in pursuit of a difficult and elusive quarry.

Trained Eagle Owls were also once used to lure a hawk or falcon into a trap known as a DHO-GAZA, which is a fine net strung vertically between two poles to capture a wild hawk in flight. The trained Eagle Owl would fly toward a lure situated behind the trap. Nearby hawks or falcons would give chase and were often caught in the invisible net.



Goliath – photo by Eric Gofreed, DVM



Shadow – Northern Goshawk

### **What's in a name?**

*Shadow*...used as a verb, means to follow, trail, track, stalk, pursue or hunt. It is a very fitting name for a bird with the reputation (documented throughout classic literature) as being the most bloodthirsty of all birds of prey.

Interestingly, *Accipiter gentilis* literally refers to a bird of prey with a gentle demeanor. This Latin name, given to the Northern Goshawk, is thought to have been inappropriately translated from the term used in medieval British falconry that actually meant “falcon gentle” and referred to a female Peregrine Falcon. In the French translation, “gentle” actually meant “noble”, but again was used in reference, normally, to a female Peregrine Falcon.

Regardless, the Northern Goshawk retains this somewhat misappropriated Latin name. In the wild, it is known as a fierce defender of its nests and nesting territories. They have shown themselves to be amazing and seemingly fearless hunters. But, when paired with a trainer, the Goshawk can be a quiet and gentle bird when handled properly. So perhaps there is some truth in their Latin name.

The common name Goshawk was derived from Old English “gos hafoc” meaning goose hawk. This is also somewhat of a misrepresentation as Goshawks rarely pursue quarry as large as a goose! It seems the Goshawk has been called many things throughout history, and as demonstrated here the names have been in some cases unbecoming this incredible bird. The

following are additional examples of names used historically and their significance:



**Chicken Hawk** – (Britain) referring to the birds predation on domestic poultry.

**Cook's Bird** – (France) The bird is a good provider of game for the pot.

**Partridge Hawk** – North American vernacular for Goshawk.

**Pigeon Hawk** – A name used formerly in England for the Goshawk, Sparrow Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and Merlin.

In modern research, ornithologists abbreviate the common names of birds into 4 letter “alpha” (alphabetic) codes as a type of shorthand. The American Ornithologists Union (AOU) assigns these codes to birds in the U.S. and Canada. The Northern Goshawk is known as NOGO.

*Guest Photo:*



*Smokey (Western Screech Owl)*

Photo by Elaine Belvin