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# Adaja's falconry camp for children



Pioneering initiative of international coexistence sharing the Intangible Cultural Heritage that falconry is.

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## Introduction

Falconry has a lot to say in areas such as education in values, the Intangible Cultural Heritage ICH, art, the encounter with nature, species conservation, etc.

I think that the easiest way of returning falconry to where it belongs in society is through children. Getting adults attention usually requires a huge effort and a lot of time and even then, there are no guarantees. Children tend to be more open-minded, without so many prejudices as adults have. On top of that, they can act as prescribers to their parents.

For instance, we may not throw a plastic bottle in the plastic container but, if our child is watching us, we think twice and look for the proper container in order to do the right thing in front of them, so that they learn from our example. In the same way, if children return home with a positive opinion on hunting and falconry, parents would at least have to listen to their points of view, and hopefully learn from them.

After all, the survival of an art is assured as long as new generations keep on learning, understanding and practising it.

Falconry is no exception. All of this is empowered by the fact that knowledge is an unlimited good: no matter how much you decide to give away, you never run out of it. So my passion for falconry and my teaching vocation led me in 1992 to the creation of the ADAJA summer camp ('Campamento ADAJA'). Throughout the last 25 years I have organized over 47 editions of this camp.







Initially, activities were focused on the awareness of the natural environment, taking into account botany, zoology and geology. Through 19 editions of the summer camp we have also encouraged a cultural exchange between Spanish and Mexican children. However, within the last 11 years, falconry has become unavoidably the big attraction of our camp, leading to what can be considered a falconry summer camp for children. As a matter of fact, the last two summers we have been lucky enough to share the experience with a huge team of hawks that children have been manning and flying, always under the close supervision of experienced falconers. We are proud to say that we have always achieved our goal of getting children involved with nature whilst they learn and enjoy their summer days.

#### **Our motivation**

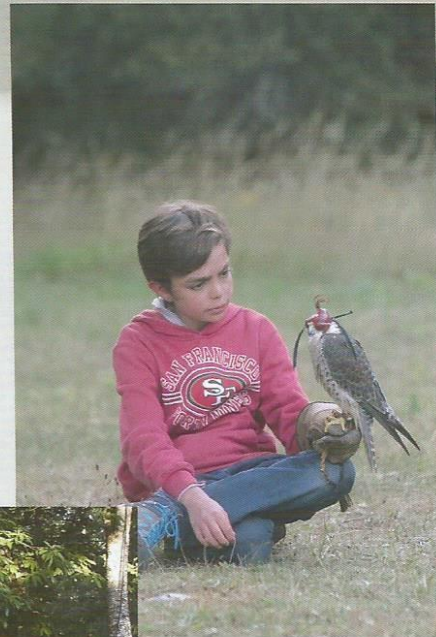
I have organized a lot of diverse activities in order to publicize falconry worldwide. Just to name a few, the monographic exhibition on falconry at the Natural Sciences National Museum in Spain and the national school contest organized in collaboration with the Spanish Ministry of Education "Falconry as seen by children". I have also carried out more than 100 workshops in schools and in the Natural Sciences National Museum and established, together with the IAF, the "World Falconry Day". I have taken part in the writing of The Ethical Code of the falconer and in the organization of different acts in the day of Francisco de Borja, Patron Saint of falconers. I have also designed and developed teaching programs about falconry for different universities. As an autor, I have written my doctoral thesis about falconry, published three books, dozens of articles and participated in

the creation of TV documentaries filmed throughout four continents. In the Falconry and UNESCO project I have led the Spanish candidacy and advised in the record of various countries... Without a doubt, all of these initiatives provide visibility and are beneficial for falconry. However, through the falconry summer camp I have achieved something else. When you live this experience with children, sharing the same spaces and activities throughout the days, you end up establishing friendly bonds around your common love for falconry. A lot of us, as IAF members, have eventually become friends after years of meetings. Can you imagine if we had met each other when we were only ten years old?

On the other hand, the feeling of belonging to the "worldwide falconry community" is a huge message of peace and understanding between different cultures. Not every falconer accomplishes this, but working in the IAF it is easy to achieve. The flight of our hawks helps us to focus on what joins us instead of looking at what makes us different politically, religiously or economically.

You could think that workshops and courses help achieve a lot of these goals. Even in the last decade, the so-called 'Day Camps' have rapidly expanded and in my opinion they try to offer something they can't really achieve. Spending the night away from home during several days allows children to experience life out of the comfort zone. The effort of living with other children in a tent establishes a common starting point for all of them, which makes their integration easier. The fact that they can overcome small difficulties on their own will help them learn how to cope with different situations in the future. However, some of the best memories children take from our camp are related to our evening games, which





are a big part of the whole experience.

Any child that finds himself out of a familiar atmosphere develops new abilities, discovers new possibilities and confronts unknown situations. They become aware of their resources and use them so that they can adapt to the group. They find in others the passion they see in themselves, sharing interests and knowledge.

Our approach is to try and encourage children, hopefully helping them acquire new knowledge regarding birds of prey and understand their role in the different ecosystems. In other words, help them discover falconry as a source of cultural interest. We would like them to be able to share their experiences taking into account their different hometowns and cultures. Even if their parents or they themselves belong to a falconry association, we encourage them to explain their singularities so that we can learn from one another.

#### 2017 Adaja's Falconry Camp

Since 1992, The ADAJA Summer Camp has been held in three different venues; it all started in Valladolid, then we moved to Segovia in the Castilnovo Castle where we stayed for 20 summers and finally, the last three camps have taken

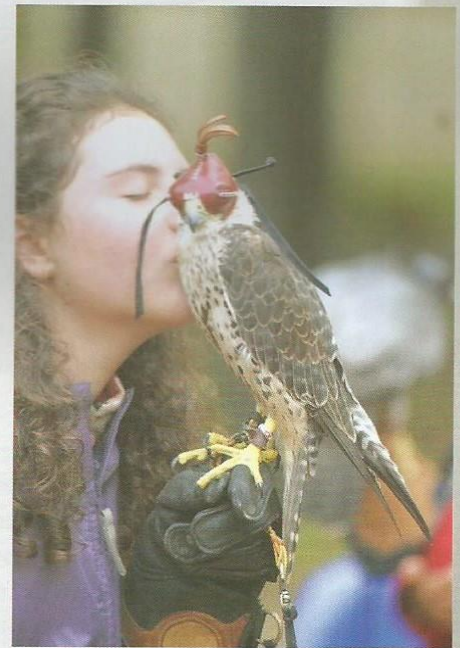
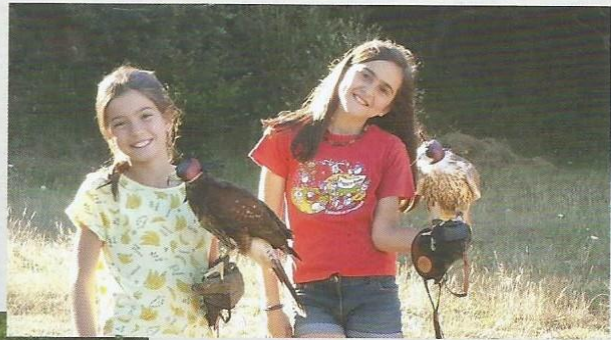
place in Espinosa de los Monteros (Burgos).

In 2015 and 2016 we have received children interested in falconry from different countries such as Italy, France, United Kingdom, Russia or the USA. All of them spoke or at least understood Spanish. However, with the idea of expanding the range of participant nationalities, in 2017, on top of our usual ADAJA Camp in Spanish that takes place between the 1st and the 15th July, we are organising the first English edition that will take place between the 17th and the 31st July.

#### Team of camp monitors

The human team leading the ADAJA Camp is the key to our success. As coordinator, when selecting my team I take into account their experience with children, their personal values, their interest and vocation and their resources. Of course, they have all passed the course needed in Spain to become a Leisure and Activity Camp Monitor or Coordinator. In some cases we even count on former campers that after a few years have returned to the ADAJA family to become camp monitors. But above all, we achieve a great balance between instructors with didactic experience in falconry and summer camp experience. After all, children expect to have fun, and being able to count





on animation technics is nothing but an added value.

### Activities

If I were asked to describe ADAJA in a single sentence, it would be 'learning while enjoying'. Every single one of our activities has a didactic component but also a playful one. ADAJA's Falconry Camp can be understood as a monographic camp on falconry. Since they wake up until they go to bed, they are continuously in touch with birds of prey. Taking advantage of the diversity of cultures that will coexist we will encourage an important cultural exchange. If for any reason at some point the English level of the participants weren't enough, camp monitors and other campers would help them out making sure they take part in every activity.

The contents explained have not only a theoretical component that campers usually write down in their notebook but also a practical application. Above all, children share experiences and emotions that they remember for a lifetime. We can classify activities in the following groups:

- **Knowledge of birds of prey**

We have a specific tent conditioned for birds where short and long wing birds are separated. We have species such as

Peregrine falcon, hybrids, lanner falcon, common kestrel, American kestrel, goshawk, Harris hawk... and also birds not related to falconry such as eagle owl or barn owl. In this workshop we show children how to identify them, we talk about their biology, how they adapt for each type of flight and for hunting and of course how they are used in falconry.

- **Implications of holding a bird of prey. Falconer ethics.**

Being a falconer doesn't only imply having a bird of prey. This ancient art has been transmitted from generation to generation for over more than 4000 years. The excellence in its practice is the best explanation for its maintenance. For this reason in the Camp we don't try to encourage children to have a hawk, but to learn everything about them and then evaluate if they are able to offer them the attentions they require. Through different dynamics, we agree on our own ethical code. Our final aim is to develop a well-informed and structured discussion, in which everyone is able to share their point of view through respect and finally learn from each other.

- **Falconer crafts and equipment**

Children are able to identify the different types of hoods and the diverse types of leathers used in their making. They





learn how to cut and sew leather as well as how to do jesses, leashes... They are able to identify different types of gloves used in different cultures, lures, balances, and perches, which they learn to use correctly as well as how to keep a bird diary. They familiarise themselves with the manipulation of transmitters and receivers. Through games, they learn how to use them and get a deeper technical understanding of their functioning.

• **Manning of birds of prey**

Each bird has its own daily routine. The cleaning, equipment reviewing, sun and water baths, food... We go through the basic needs of a bird in order to maintain its mental and physical health. We explain children how these birds need to be treated, the veterinary checks they have to go through and how they have to be transported, not only in the fist but also by car.

• **Flights**

Before flying the birds we explain to the children how to keep a falconer diary. In this notebook, every day we write down the weight of our bird. Campers even manipulate birds during their taming. Others fly from fist to fist and some falcons fly to the lure. This means that they get in touch with everything they need to maintain their bird in the best conditions.

• **Lectures on falconry**

In the ADAJA summer camp we develop lectures and project videos, followed by debates and discussions on the following topics:

- Falconry as Intangible Cultural Heritage ICH by the UNESCO

- Falconry and conservation
- The IAF
- Veterinary cares of birds of prey
- Captive breeding of birds of prey
- Wildlife/pest control with falconry birds
- International Falconry; differences and similarities in Europe, Central Asia, Arabian countries, America...
- Debates between assistants and the lecturer will allow everyone to learn and make the most of their knowledge. Without a doubt others' experiences will enrich our own.
- Collateral activities on falconry

On top of all the already mentioned activities we also develop painting workshops in which we use our birds as natural models and activities related to the photography of birds. With these images and the material filmed during the camp we are able to make projections and that way we can identify our mistakes and learn from them, improving our techniques. We also develop a simple newsletter with the kids, so that parents are informed of our daily activities.

**Information and registration**

The registration period opens in January 2017, and it can be done through any of these websites: [www.avium.es](http://www.avium.es) or [www.adaja.es](http://www.adaja.es). If you have any doubts or you are interested in getting more information please don't hesitate to request it at [jceballos@avium.es](mailto:jceballos@avium.es) 🦅