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Gordon L. Grenfell

**Golden, Colorado
May, 1949-November, 2009**

— by **Wayne F. Pennington**

Gordon became involved in Falconry at 8 years of age. Like most of us it was with a Kestrel. Why he became involved we never discussed in the 38 years that I have known Gordon. I suppose like most of us, it was after watching a Disney movie.

Gordon loved to blind trap and I always felt pity for any pigeon that refused to try and fly. It was rare for Gordon to trap any other way. Gordon would search for a Goshawk nest every year. I spent several nights with him in the high country around a roaring campfire at night. We talked about birds in the past and thought about what birds we would fly in the future.

Gordon was the owner-operator of Falconhead Press, which sold new, used and reprinted falconry books. Falconhead Press evolved into Falconhead Mailing Service in Golden, Colorado.

He reprinted several of the old classic falconry books in collaboration with Barrie Watson, which included *Falconry: Its Claims, History, and Practice* by G.E. Freeman and F.H. Salvin and *Reminiscences of a Falconer* by C.H. Fisher. He also compiled into book form, in collaboration with Barrie Watson, the American Falconers Club Journals 1941-1961. In 1974 he revised the journals by adding an index. Barrie recently told me he and Gordon worked 18 hours a day for 9 days just on the index. Gordon once told me the printing of the journals was his greatest accomplishment at that time. The journals have become very rare and there will most likely never be another reprint.

Gordon loved small falcons and hawks. He loved to lure fly small falcons and was very proficient with a lure. He loved Accipiters but the Peregrine was special to him as with us all. Gordon supported the recovery of the Peregrine from the very beginning. He was also a supporter of the North American Falconer's Association over the years.

When the Peregrine was delisted as an endangered species, Gordon decided to run for President of the Colorado Hawking Club so he could be involved with getting a legal take of eyass *Anatum* Peregrines to be used in the art of falconry by Colorado falconers.

Gordon, along with other officers of the Colorado Hawking Club, spent hundreds of hours writing emails making phone calls, talking to members of the Colorado Wildlife Commission and anyone else they could talk to and who would listen. Commissioners were invited to observe falconry or just to watch the falcons fly to the balloon or lure. Gordon would spend several late nights sending emails to every person who he thought would help. His phone bills had to be outrageous with all the long distance calls he made to the USFWS in Washington D.C., NAFA officers and NAFA Attorney Frank Bond.

Gordon spent hundreds of hours walking the halls of the Capitol building in Denver, Colorado. He would approach State Senators, Congressmen and State Legislators explaining the biology, decline and the recovery of the Peregrine Falcon. He explained how Falconers gave up their own Peregrine Falcons and millions of dollars in donations to the Peregrine breeders in the United States. He explained how breeders spent thousands of dollars of their own money to breed and release captive-bred Peregrines to the wild; how



Gordon, Becca, Spencer



Ila Grenfell and Gordon



falconers pioneered cross-fostering the Peregrine with Prairie Falcons in wild eyries; how falconers were among the first to come to the rescue of the Peregrine Falcon. He spent so much time at the Capitol Building he finally became a Registered Lobbyist.

Gordon didn't stop with just the Peregrine; he formed the Caretakers of Wild Raptors. He worked with the BLM and Forestry Service to allow members to set up nesting platforms for Ferruginous Hawks on the Comanche Grasslands in Southern Colorado, which are being used by Ferruginous Hawks while raising their young.

The last time I spoke with Gordon he told me he had 3 outstanding accomplishments in his life: Spencer, his son - when he spoke of Spencer his eyes would light up; his involvement in a legal take of wild bred Peregrine Falcons; and The American Falconers Club Journals that he compiled into a single book form.

In 1996 Greg Hayes was looking for a Goshawk nest. He asked Gordon if he would check one area while he checked another. Gordon called me and asked if I would be interested in taking a "two hour hike". Being addicted to Goshawks for 30 years I was ready to go. We met Greg in the mountains North of Golden. Greg explained to Gordon what he had in mind was to hike along this creek to the road that lead into Golden Gate Park and Greg would pick us up in the park. Gordon said he knew the road. This two hour hike ended up taking eighteen hours.

Gordon, his son Spencer, who was 12 at the time, and I started down the game trail looking into the aspens for any signs of Goshawks. After hiking a couple hours I asked Gordon where the road was and Gordon said he wasn't real sure but it had to be close. As we walked it started getting late and I asked Gordon again where this road was. "Around the next bend" was the answer. Spencer was carrying my camera when we crossed a creek Spencer slipped on a moss-covered rock and went under. Needless to say the camera was ruined and Spencer was soaked to the bone.

We were walking in the dark trying to feel our way along the creek. At midnight I tripped and fell and told Gordon we were not going any farther that night. Gordon said we would freeze to death without a fire and it had rained that day so everything was soaked. I ended up taking my shirt and ripping it up to get a fire to start. We sat around that small fire talking for a while then tried to sleep. Each time we started to doze, the fire would die down to just hot coals. We would start to shiver and race to find something dry to burn. The next morning we walked around the curve of the creek to find a waterfall 30 feet high and 30 feet wide. If we had walked into that the night before, we would have all drowned. We walked another three hours and finally walked into Ralston Mine. The security guard told us we were trespassing. I won't repeat what I told the guard.

I wrote an article for *American Falconry* magazine, titled "In Search Of Goshawks: Dedication Or Insanity," (Vol. 7, June 1997) in which I described that night in detail. Bill Burnham of The Peregrine Fund wrote his book *A Fascination With Falcons* (1997) in which he mentioned the time Bill and Gordon spent hiking all night at Moose Lake in Wyoming looking for Peregrines. I asked Gordon what he knew about Moose Lake and he looked at me and asked "what do you know about Moose Lake?" Then I showed him Bill's book. He read the section about Moose Lake and said "Dang, first you write about my getting stranded then Bill writes about it. People are going to think I am an idiot!"

— by Wayne Pennington

Tribute to Gordon Grenfell

— by Anne Price

I don't remember the first time I met Gordon, but I do recall thinking that he was incredibly well-read and seemed to have an extensive knowledge of Colorado falconry. I thought I knew who all the "big" names were who had resided in our state and had been the pioneers in the early peregrine recovery effort in Colorado. But Gordon took me way back and started at the beginning, mentioning names like Morgan Berthrong and other biologists and falconers I had never heard of. His knowledge of printing and book-binding was encyclopedic. He had a true passion for books and lovingly described what it took to print and bind a fine-quality volume.

Gordon's interest in natural history, particularly that of Colorado, never ceased to amaze me. I remember that once we were talking on the phone about large mammalian carnivores in Colorado, and the extinction of the grizzly bear. Gordon told me that maybe, just maybe, the great bears still roamed our state, and then proceeded to tell me about a book he had on the subject, called Ghost Grizzlies. He had met the author and found his arguments for the continued survival of the grizzly bear in Colorado quite compelling. The next time we had a CHC meeting, Gordon brought me the book. He was generous that way and would give you the shirt off his back, or in this case, the book off his shelf, with no terms or thought of getting it back.

There were those who seriously underestimated Gordon, based on how he spoke in public. It was not his forte, and he knew that. But he was earnest, friendly, very knowledgeable and

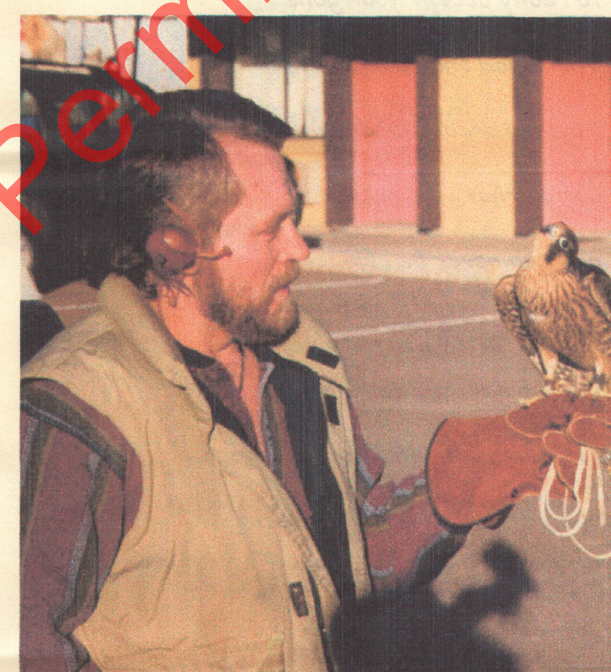
approachable in person, and it was in these one-on-one conversations that Gordon really shined. It was thanks to him, among many, many others, that the long and ultimately successful regulations governing peregrine take were established in Colorado. Gordon worked very hard in those early meetings with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, fighting an endemic culture which practically refused to believe that a take of wild peregrines was feasible, reasonable, or even politically-justifiable. If he hadn't worked as hard as he did, as patiently and steadily as he did, we would not have a wild take of peregrines in Colorado.

Another wonderful legacy of Gordon's was a program within the Colorado Hawking Club which he started, called "Caretakers of Wild Raptors". Gordon envisioned that falconers should want to help the Division of Wildlife and other groups such as the National Forest Service, Audubon, etc., to count, study and monitor wild raptors, and not just those species that were of interest or "use" to falconers. Gordon wanted to find a way to build bridges, and give back to the wild resource. Thanks to his leadership, the CHC has worked in the Pawnee National Grasslands erecting nesting platforms for Ferruginous Hawks, and also helped with nesting raptor surveys and counts in the southern end of Colorado, at the Comanche Grasslands. The goodwill in the birding community and camaraderie within the Club that these events generate are Gordon's legacy. He loved it when falconers and non-falconers found common ground and ways to work together.

He was a kind man, a good friend and a skillful president during some turbulent years in the Colorado Hawking Club. I miss him greatly....



"I lived my life to the fullest with my always present passion,



passion for life and birds of prey."

Gordon

