



PHOTOS:
Top: Passage Falcon, 1953
Middle: Hawk Mountain, 1956
Bottom: Dana enjoyed fishing



DONORS:

Scott Struthers, The Family of Dana and Jeraldine Struthers

A LIFELONG FALCONER in the EARLY HISTORY of AMERICAN FALCONRY

(The following is based upon Dana Struther's Oral History of his falconry submitted to the Archives on March 26, 1994 while he was living in Lake Wales, Florida)

Dana Struthers was a lifelong falconer. He grew up during legendary period of falconry and bird trapping along the upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes. He was born in Minneapolis on June 12, 1923 and got his first bird, an eyass Cooper's Hawk, at the age of 12. He said, with pride, that he had broken both arms the year before and could not do many things – other than climb trees! He had found between 15-20 Coopers' nests in the vicinity of Camp Carlos. He was motivated by a camp counselor to train a hawk. He named the bird "Hazard" and took his time with her before he trusted her enough to fly her free. Eventually, he lost her. She was gone for 2 to 3 weeks. One day, as he was walking home from school, she landed on him. She had recognized him and returned as though she had never been gone!

An early mentor was William Kilgore who had authored the Birds of Minnesota. Mr. Kilgore, a non-falconer, gave him dutch bells, a Mollen hood, and several falconry books. He was an early associate of Bob Widmeier. He recalls two eyass tiercel peregrines that Bob and a friend had taken from an eyrie on the St. Croix River. They were spectacular fliers! He calls that Widmeier was such a master craftsman/hoodmaker that he could just look at a bird and then cut a perfect beak opening without so much as a trial fit. Struthers said that Widmeier flew the best birds he had ever seen until he began to watch Bob Anderson recently in Minnesota/Iowa.

Another early mentor was legendary Ed Feeney of Spooner, Wisconsin. They would travel along the upper Mississippi River and its tributaries and located at least 15 peregrine eyries. One year, Mrs. Feeney trapped 19 peregrines in a short time at Cedar Grove. Struthers related that no matter what Feeney was doing, he would take time off and trap hawks during the migrations: Escanaba, Michigan in the fall, and Whitefish Point, Michigan in the spring. Struthers himself enjoyed trapping along the north shore of Lake Superior under Silver Creek Bluff. They would

watch peregrines "flicker hunting" along the tops of bushes. He would watch pairs of peregrines engage in cooperative hunting of nighthawks – the tiercel waiting on while the falcon skimmed the surface of the river. He would find where the birds would cache their kills – sometimes as many as 10 to 15 head.

He was a keen observer of natural history. While trapping he would watch merlins ring up after small birds, catch them, and then release them. They would stoop and repeat the catch and release several times. He recalled catching a merlin that was nearly as large as a tiercel peregrine.

Dana Struthers was involved in the conservation community. Through Widmeier he met Duck Stamp artist Kouba who became a close friend. They met the legendary Captain Knight (Phillip Glasier's uncle) who came to the Minnesota Natural History Society with his Golden Eagle, Mr. Ramshaw. Struthers said the eagle was so old that it would hit people in the audience when he would fly above them to the stage.

Dana enjoyed photography. He had a large slide collection and associated with well known wildlife photographers such as the Craigheds, the Murrays, Captain Knight, Emil Lehrer. He published in the "Minnesota Naturalist" frequently with Forest Lee (who once photographed 15-20 peregrines sitting on a wire in the Aleutians!).

Around 1953, he took a leave of absence and travelled to Europe. He visited with the Dutch falconer Dykstra and the famous English artist George Lodge. He brought back hoods from the renowned Otto Kalls. He asked Lodge who his favorite artist was – and Lodge said Joseph Wolfe. He celebrated Lodge's 93rd birthday with him. He recalls that the week before Lodge had wandered off 8 or 10 miles to see the roots of a tree he wanted to paint. His friends had to go find him! He also said they Lodge greatly admired the American wildlife artist Fuertes.

Dana Struthers lived the early history of American falconry!





Observer of natural history and involved in the conservation community, Dana lived the early history of American Falconry.

