

NORTHERN MESSENGER

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FALCONS AND FALCONRY.

For many centuries falconry was the national sport of England, rivalling even the great pastime of fox-hunting.

Strict laws were made from time to time regarding it and only certain classes of men were allowed to keep certain kinds of birds. To royalty alone was permitted the use of the jer-falcon; an earl might use a peregrino, and a yeoman hunt with the gos-hawk, but the little sparrow-hawk was considered quite good enough, for a priest, while the "knave" or servant dare be seen with nothing but the



HOBBY.

even gazelles throughout Asia and Africa. The hawks most in use in England at the present time are the three great northern falcons, the Greenland, Iceland, and Norway falcons, the peregrine, hobby, merlin, goshawk, and of these the favorites are the peregrino and goshawk. Hawks are divided into two great classes: First, falcons proper, or long winged hawks, with pointed wings in which the second feather is the longest and the irides are a dark brown; and, second, hawks whose wings are rounded, with the fourth feather the longest, and the irides of yellow, orange or deep orange. The females of all the varieties are larger and more powerful than the males.

Now for a few individuals. The Peregrino is considered the



MERLIN.

The Hobby is the representative of another group of falcons and is recognized by its bold upstanding position and long wings. The English hobby is a bird of great power of flight and is largely used in the capture of insects, which form its chief food. It visits Europe during the summer, when it is needlessly and wantonly destroyed by game-keepers who falsely accuse it of destroying much of their game.



PEREGRINE FALCON.



GOSHAWK.



MARSH HARRIER.

useless kestrel. About the middle of the seventh century, however, the sport began to decline, and since then, though rallying occasionally, advancing civilization has proved too strong for it. The enclosure of waste land and general agricultural improvements gave it its first blow, next and strongest was the introduction of fire arms into the sporting field, and to-day, though successfully practised in odd places, is as a national sport extinct. Almost all kinds of small game were hunted with one or other of the many varieties of the falcons, from larks, partridges and rabbits in England to bustards, storks, pea-fowl, spoon-bills, kites, vultures and



HONEY BUZZARD.

typical falcon and is the bird most commonly trained for hawking. It is about the size of the raven, and for its size, the most powerful and courageous bird of prey that flies. Its color is blackish-blue above and white with more or less cream color beneath. It is the most familiar of all the hawk tribes, there being hardly a country from the Arctic circle to Tasmania and the Argentine Republic where it is not at home. It will adapt itself to any circumstances, building its eyry either on the sea cliffs, craggy inland mountains, the dry parts of an American marsh, trees in the forests of Java, or waterless ravines of Australia. Game keepers have long looked upon it as their worst foe, but without reason, as it attacks none but the weak and diseased birds.



The Merlin is one of a small but very beautiful falcon group and is extremely bold, not hesitating to attack birds of twice its size and even occasionally human beings. Yet it is easily trained and when trained is very affectionate. The female has a sober plumage but the male is much gayer with the proverbial "pinions of glossy blue," and the deep ruddy hue of its lower parts. It is used chiefly for flying at larks. Its nest is usually found low among the heather. The

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AUBERT