

People & Places

Birds of prey soar over vineyards

John Hawley, a winery owner, follows his interest in falconry

By JULIA HOLLISTER
For the Capital Press

SONOMA COUNTY, Calif. — John Hawley's interest in falconry hatched when he was a teenager.

"When I was 15 a neighbor caught a hawk in his coop," he said. Hawley and a couple of his friends went in together and bought the bird. It was 1964, and there were no laws against keeping birds of prey, he said.

"The following year I sent \$15 to the California Department of Fish and Game and they sent me my first falconry license," he said.

"We took a young red-tail hawk from a nest for my friend Nick and my friend Paul took a nestling barn owl, which lived in his laundry closet. And then we all got kestrels, (tiny falcons), which we all trained to hunt," he said.

They eventually went to college and the birds were released back into the wild.

Fast-forward 15 years. By 1981 he had become the winemaker for Clos du Bois, and for Kendall-Jackson in 1990. In 1996 he started his own winery.

"In 1997, I contacted California Fish and Game about renewing my falconry license," he said. The laws had changed a lot. He had to take a 100-question test about birds of prey, their diseases and falconry laws.

"I joined the California Hawking Club and found a local falconer to apprentice," he said. He built a new mew, a special room with smooth



John Hawley, founder of Hawley Wines in Dry Creek Valley, Calif., and a licensed falconer, shows his Peregrine falcon.



John Hawley with his Peregrine falcon.

walls, floor and ceiling, bars for windows, perches and an anteroom to prevent escapes.

Hawley also purchased a transmitter and radio receiver to track the bird.

This was a revolutionary idea. Previously, the only way to track a bird was to follow it with binoculars or to fit it with bells.

"I built a special trap, bought a hamster as bait and headed out to find a bird," he said. "After a couple hours of driving I finally located a large immature red-tail. We watched the hawk hunt for

field mice. Then I put out my trap and moments later I had my new falconry bird."

But that was just the beginning.

"Everything about falconry is long, slow and tedious," he said. "You spend days on end 'manning' the bird so it totally loses all fear of you. You train the bird to fly to you for food. First just a jump, but soon the bird is flying 100 yards to you."

All training is based on positive reinforcement, he said.

"The next step is enter-

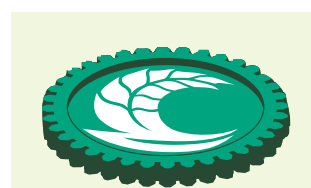
ing on game, and this is the tricky part because the hawk must be successful or he will lose confidence and refuse to hunt," he said. "Most birds can be trained to free fly in about a month."

Hawley said he sometimes hunts in vineyards, but doesn't use his bird of prey for the abatement of birds that feed on grapes. Often, just the appearance of his bird is enough to cause other birds to leave.

Vineyard managers often hire abatement hawks and falcons, which are not trained to kill birds and animals, but to get rewards for just chasing them. He practices falconry, which is hunting with birds of prey.

Hawks are distantly related to falcons, which have long, pointed wings and are more social than most hawks. Hawks have fan-like wings with finger-like projections.

"I love the flight of falcons," Hawley said. "We falconers like for our birds to take a position 1,000 to 2,000 feet above our heads. Then we flush the game and the falcon closes its wings into a tear drop shape and comes down



Western Innovator

John Hawley

Hometown: Dry Creek Valley, outside Healdsburg, Calif.

Occupation: Owner, Hawley Wines, falconer

Quote: "This (training) is all about trust, so you must always treat falconry birds with great respect and care."

out of the sky like a missile, hopefully striking the quarry at high speed. Generally the quarry is dead when it hits the ground. Hawks, on the other hand, squeeze their prey to death."

There are about 200 falconers in California, he said.

"Owls are good for nocturnal pests, but they don't do anything about birds in the vineyard. A single peregrine falcon can protect 500 acres by just overflying it. Typically an abatement person has several falcons as well as a Harris hawk or two. That way they can keep a raptor in the air all morning and all afternoon."

It is a lot of work and can be frustrating to the falconer when things don't go well, like when a bird decides to fly over to the next county, he said.

"It's a real three-ring circus," he said. "The abatement work day starts before sunrise. You need to have a bird in the air as the sun comes up because that is when bird flocks send out their scouts, looking for a safe place to feed."

'Thank a farmer' show part education, part magic

By CRAIG REED
For the Capital Press

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. — "What do an egg, a baseball and a tube of lipstick have in common?"

That was the question Rhonda Swanson asked an audience of grade-school kids and adults during her "Thank a Farmer" magic show on Feb. 21 at the 33rd annual Farm Expo.

Before juggling the three products, Swanson told the listeners all three items came from agriculture.

The kids knew, of course, that the egg came from a chicken, but Swanson then explained to them that the white covering on the major league baseball she was holding came from cowhide and that the lipstick consisted of beeswax and olive oil and numerous other animal and plant ingredients.

Swanson gave two 30-minute presentations at the Farm Expo and gave shorter presentations at the dairy booth as fourth-grade students circulated through 18 agricultural-themed booths at the event.



Rhonda Swanson holds a major league baseball and explains to the audience of kids and adults at the Farm Expo in Klamath Falls, Ore., that the covering is cowhide. She says kids need to learn at an early age to respect farmers and their work.

The two-day expo attracted about 850 students from Klamath, Lake and Modoc counties.

Swanson, 51, came up with the "Thank a Farmer" program about 10 years ago, after talking to a Wisconsin dairy farm family and hearing the children talk about being bullied at school because of their lifestyle.

"When city kids move to the rural areas, they don't understand the lifestyle of those already living there," said Swanson, whose family has farmed in Iowa for six gener-

ations. "I took a look at what was out there for kids to learn about the importance of farming and I didn't see much, if any, outreach to the consumers."

"I asked, 'How can we get the importance of farmers to our communities?'" she said. "The best way was through the kids."

Swanson said at that time animal activists and their organizations and the anti-genetically modified organisms groups were being vocal in public about their beliefs. She

said there was no program to educate the public about agriculture.

So Swanson, who was already in the entertainment business with her mother, Joyce, as the Wacky Women of the Wild West, developed the "Thank a Farmer" magic show. She figured that children are attracted to magic and including two or three tricks would help keep their attention as she talked about agriculture.

She also noted that one of the first things taught to children is to say "Thank you" after being given something.

Swanson said she believes kids today begin to develop prejudices in elementary school so she thinks it is important to get the message out about respecting agriculture to those youngsters.

"The idea behind 'Thank a Farmer' is to raise their realization through thanking a farmer, that something is being done for them," explained Swanson, who is now a Las Vegas-area resident.

Swanson recently spent 24 days at the Fort Worth, Texas, Livestock Show and Rodeo,

giving her presentation to a total of 20,000 pre-school to fourth-grade kids.

"I know how hard farming is from my own family's background," she said. "To have people outside of the industry criticize it and to criticize the people who are farming makes me mad. I know it is their own ignorance because they are so far removed from the process. I created something that would educate them, starting at a young age."

"The people in agriculture are a special people," she continued. "They are willing to take those risks when other people aren't, they are willing to put in long days when other people aren't, they miss vacations when other people don't, they miss special occasions when other people don't. Farmers are a committed group who are deserving of a 'thank you' every now and then."

"As more kids live in cities and towns, they don't have contact with a farmer," she added. "The goal of this magic show is to educate and to explain to kids why they should thank a farmer."

Calendar

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Saturday, March 10

GOP gubernatorial forum. 2:30-4 p.m. University of Idaho, Administration Auditorium, 841 Campus Drive, Moscow, Idaho. The University of Idaho Food and Agricultural Business Club presents the GOP gubernatorial forum. The community is invited to hear from GOP candidates about issues that affect agriculture in Idaho. Candidates Tommy Ahlquist and Lt. Gov. Brad Little will answer questions during the forum regarding agriculture in Idaho.

Farm and Ranch Succession Planning Workshop. 10 a.m.-2

p.m. Klamath Community College, Building 6, Room H138, 7390 S. Sixth St., Klamath Falls, Ore. To help growers take the next step in succession planning, OSU Extension, Klamath Community College, Klamath Small Business Development Center, Klamath Watershed Partnership and Rogue Farm Corps are coordinating a farm succession workshop. Presenters will include Diana Tourney of the Oregon Small Business Development Center Network on how to create a plan with your family, attorney Joe Hobson of Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt on how to prepare your estate, local farmers who have been through the process, and Nellie McAdams, Farm Preservation Program Director at Rogue Farm Corps. The event is free and lunch is included. RSVP to help make sure we provide enough food. Cost: Free. Contact: nellie@roguefarmcorps.org or 971-409-6806 Website: <http://bit.ly/2EUVzPb>

Monday, March 12

Farm Land Access and Succession Planning Workshop. 2:30-8:30 p.m. Pine Grove Grange, 2835 Van Horn Drive, Hood River, Ore. Rogue Farm Corps, Gorge Grower, OSU Extension, Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District, Wasco Soil and Water Conservation District, Friends of Family Farmers and the Small Business Development Center are coordinating a farmland access and succession workshop for farmers and ranchers throughout the Columbia River Gorge. The afternoon session will concentrate on land access, followed by dinner at 5 p.m. The farm succession workshop will follow dinner. RSVP by March 5 or send any questions to Nellie McAdams, nellie@roguefarmcorps.org, 971-409-6806.

Friday, March 16

Ten Acres and a Dream small acreage workshop. 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Ponderay Events Center, 401

Bonner Mall Way, Suite E, Sandpoint, Idaho. Topics include living on the land, growing crops, raising livestock, managing pastures and forestry fundamentals. Cost: \$15. Website: <http://bit.ly/2Gxia5S>

Saturday, March 17

Ten Acres and a Dream small acreage workshop. 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Centennial Distributing Co., 701 West Buckles Road, Hayden, Idaho. Topics include living on the land, raising crops and livestock, managing pastures and forestry fundamentals. Cost: \$15. Website: <http://bit.ly/2Gxia5S>

Sunday, March 18

Fruit Propagation Fair. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Clackamas County Fairgrounds, 694 NE Fourth Ave., Canby, Ore. The fair offers attendees hundreds of varieties of free scions and cuttings. If you graft, this is paradise. Or you can choose custom grafting by experts for only \$5. Free with

admission are hundreds of varieties of apple, pear, cherry, plum and persimmon scions. There will also be cuttings of grapes, kiwis and figs to root. Arrive early for the best selection. Home Orchard Society experts will be available to answer fruit-growing questions. Mason bee supplies are available for sale, as well as fruit-growing publications. Cost: \$7 per person or \$12 per family for non-members. Website: <http://homeorchardsociety.org>

Tuesday-Thursday March 20-22

International Mass Timber Conference. Oregon Convention Center, 777 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Portland, Ore. There will be 70-plus speakers from 20 nations and more than 60 exhibits, plus a tour of Oregon's mass timber buildings. Website: www.forestbusiness-network.com

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