

Falconry Revived In Ozark Mountains

THAYER, Mo. (UPI)—Falconry, an historic sport that pits bird against bird, has experienced a revival in this Ozark Mountains region.

Lumberman Daniel A. Cover said the grace and skill of the hunt with the powerful birds has attracted many "gun hunters."

Cover hunts quail, crows and starlings with his falcons here and travels to Canada to hunt Hungarian partridges and sharp-tailed grouse.

"The birds are so swift, so graceful to watch in flight, that hunting with falcons is a thrill," he said. "In fact, a near miss of a game bird with a falcon can be as spectacular as success."

Cover was a longtime gun hunter but was lured to falconry by its history, which dates back to Kubla Khan, and by the ease and lack of challenge with which game is killed with firearms.

"If the average gun hunter took home as little game (as a falconer), he probably would give up hunting," Cover said.

He said although the percentage of kill is low, the swirl, dive and play of nature against nature is "very exciting."

"It is just as important to have a good bird dog when you hunt with falcons as when you hunt with guns," he said. "When the dog points game, you release the falcon from your wrist and he is

trained to fly 200 to 300 feet above you.

"When the falcon is in good position, you flush the birds and the falcon swoops."

He said the kill is accomplished when the falcon seizes the victim with its powerful talons.

Cover said falconry is an inexpensive sport.

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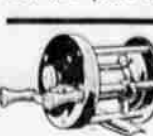
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