



Newsletter

Arizona Falconers Association

March 2018

A Message from the President

Charlie Kaiser

Lots of stuff to talk about... let's get to it...

The meet in Chino Valley in January was well attended. There was plenty of game in the area, but it was tough to catch. Those rabbits sure act differently than the ones at home! Lots of people were successful in Chino, though. One of the fun things about going to meets is taking your hawks to entirely different habitat and watching them adapt to become successful in a very short amount of time. In total, we had 42 cottontails, 18 jackrabbits, 1 quail, and 3 others taken at the meet. Not bad!

I want to thank all those responsible for putting on this meet... Paul and Anne Schnell, Jeremy Hough and Nancy Arden, John Bostwick, Kristy McDonald, and Juli Bianchi-Ostler were the power hitters, with Pam Hessey working tirelessly behind the scenes as usual. Great job, everyone!

We learned some good lessons putting on a meet in a town we hadn't visited before and we plan to put those to good use for future meets...

The hotel was very good to us although the location was not without its challenges. It's very difficult to find a hotel that will allow animals in the rooms, have a weathering yard area, and have reasonable prices. The lack of an elevator at the

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Day's Inn was rough but the staff was willing to assist with moving things up and down the stairs when they could. Elevators or ground floor rooms will be something we require for future meets, though.

It seems we are getting close to a hundred people consistently at our meets the past few years. We are going to start requiring a higher banquet room capacity in our planning to provide more space. This banquet was tight but still OK, but I'd have preferred a lot more room to move around.

Our raffle went well, with LOTS of great items. Shannon McQuerry, a recent transplant to AZ, was our raffle caller, and as an auctioneer, he has great experience and got that whole thing done in just under an hour! We plan to use Shannon's help again in the future. We are also planning to start doing both a silent auction and a "real" auction for some items at future meets, so stay tuned for that... Juli did a great job pulling items together and setting up the room...

We are planning a member survey in the very near future. We want to know what people like and don't like about the meets and AFA in general. When you get the survey, please take the time to respond. It will be online so you can do it easily. Stay tuned...

Next year's meet... It's tough to plan a meet far in advance; the main problem is knowing where game will be next winter. We all know how quickly game can disappear in the desert, especially when the rains don't come at the right times. Kingman, for example, is experiencing a significant decline in cottontails and quail right now. Will this change next year? Probably not; rains have not been kind so far. Game is cyclical, and we learn to go with the flow on that. So when we choose a meet location, our primary goal is always game availability.

I have wanted us to put on a meet in Tucson for a long time. The winter gem show and the general snowbird migration tends to cause hotel rates to be too high, but we are looking at the outskirts of the city to find some possibilities. One thing that tends to excite people about Tucson is the availability of Antelope Jackrabbits in the area. We'll see what happens...

I have occasionally heard the question, "What is the AFA?" I wanted to address that... Our mission statement reads: "The purpose of the Arizona Falconers Association is to provide communication and interaction among interested members; to promote the ethical and legal pursuit of falconry as a recognized field sport; to promote the use of sound biological principles and information in the management of raptor populations and falconry; and to encourage programs of public education, scientific study and habitat conservation which advance the welfare of falconry and birds of prey."

We are, in effect, a social club. We are not a 501(c)(3) charity; we are not a lobbying organization; we are not a state agency. We are a small group of dedicated practitioners of the sport of falconry. I like to think we make it easier for new people to take up the sport. I like our get-togethers to be fun and help people form new friendships and rekindle old ones. I like our meets to be desired destinations for people in AZ and from all over the country.

We also maintain a close relationship with AZGFD to ensure that regulations for falconry are fair and enable us to practice our sport freely. We have some of the best falconry regs and game seasons in the country, and I am proud of that.

As we have grown in the past decade, we have also been doing more to help with raptor conservation. We do a number of education programs each year and are providing donations to worthy raptor conservation projects. We are, however, a small group and cannot provide the heavy horsepower that larger groups such as Ducks Unlimited can provide. That does not mean we cannot help though. We will keep doing what we can...

My goal for our club is simply to provide a friendly place for falconry and give back what we can to the birds that make our sport what it is.

As with any small organization, there is a core group of members that get involved and work to make the club what it is. Most people are content to enjoy the club, and that's fine. But if you have the inclination to get involved, if you want to make a difference, if you want to drive the direction of the AFA, I encourage you to get involved. You can reach out to me or any board member and we can help you get involved. At this past meet I had several people let me know they had specific talents or abilities that would help the club and I welcome that with open wings!

Our board is small; we could double its size easily. If you do well at organization and management and would like to participate, consider joining us. If you are a licensed Arizona general or master level falconer and want to be on the board, let us know. There is a significant amount of work needed for board members, so I won't minimize the work, and commitment to getting it done is critical. Think about it...

Goals for 2018 – I have a few things I'd like to see us do this year... First, a good meet in a new location. Next, I would like to see more regional get-togethers. AFA will underwrite these for people who are willing to put them on. We often have one here in Kingman, with a summer picnic in Prescott. But I'd like to see a few down south as well. Phoenix, Tucson, how about it? Spring and fall are great times to get together down in the valley... I'd also like to see us do more skill-sharing for apprentices. Equipment making workshops,

coping demos, training seminars, things like that. I'd also like to see us get newsletters out more often. Anne and Paul are really good at this and will be sending out more frequent communications to members about items of interest.

Do YOU have things you'd like to see AFA do this year? Email or call me and I'll work to make it happen!

I hope you had a great season and have finished with healthy hawks. See you again soon...

Kestrel Boxes to be Placed on the Kaibab National Forest

Urban Forestry Specialist and fellow falconer Jon Orona received ten American Kestrel nest boxes at our January meet that were donated by the AFA and AZ's Raptor Experience. The boxes will be placed on the Kaibab National Forest this month. Orona hopes to examine the impact of grassland restoration treatments and forest thinning in edge habitat on American Kestrel nest success and productivity. Five boxes will be placed as control nest boxes, five in grassland restoration areas and five in edge habitat that has been recently thinned or will be thinned. Updates on this project will come in future newsletters.

This project is possible, in part, because of AFA's participation and funding.



Jon Orona (right) received 10 Kestrel boxes at the January 2018 AFA meet. They will be placed in the Kaibab National Forest in late March.

Photo by Jan Dawson

Photo Highlights of the 2018 Desert Hawking Classic Chino Valley, AZ



Pam and Charlie getting in an early hunt before the work begins!

Our banquet speaker Chase Delles with hunting partner Dexter



Martial Eagle brought by Chase Delles



John Bostwick's apprentice workshop



Weathering Yard



A fine group of falconers!





Successful hunt!
Jeremy Hough



She caught her first quail!



Nicole Peretta receives
the first Ken Mesch
Memorial Award



*Photos courtesy of
Nancy Arden, Joe
Mancino and Paul
Schnell*



Chase Delles
presents on eagle
falconry at the
banquet.

Would *you* help plan the 2019 AFA Desert Hawking Classic?

Please contact Charlie Kaiser if you are interested.

Tidbits of Important News...

It's time to update the **AFA Membership Directory**. You will receive an e-mail soon requesting a photo of you and your bird(s) and a short bio.

Take a new photo before the hunting season winds down!! If you'd like to get started, please follow this format for the bio:

1. **Your name** as you would like it to appear in the directory
2. **Where you live:** City/town and State
3. **Your phone number and e-mail address** (please let us know if you **DO NOT** want these listed)
4. **Your current status:** Apprentice, General or Master Falconer
5. **For those eligible** – are you willing to sponsor anyone?
6. **A photo of you and your bird** – please try to provide a head or upper body photo – all photos (preferably uncluttered and high resolution) will be cropped to approximately the same size making full body photos rather small.
7. A short bio describing your history as a falconer. Please limit this to **150** words or less. Some editing **will** occur if word limit is exceeded.

Upcoming education event:

2018 Arizona Game and Fish Department Outdoor Expo.

Ben Avery Shooting Facility

Saturday March 24, 2018 – Sunday March 25, 2018

Interested in helping? Contact Shantell Dahlberg at blondie5_0@hotmail.com

On-line Survey coming soon!!

Please take the time to give us your feedback about our annual hawking classic and AFA in general.