

PARENT FACTSHEET

FOR FALCONERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

So your child wants to become a falconer, what do you need to know? If you haven't already read the "Is Falconry Right for Me" factsheet, please do so now.

Why should I allow my child to become a falconer?

Falconry is more than a sport; it is a way of hunting that dates back over 4,000 years. It is one of the few activities that allow a human trainer to form a hunting bond with a wild animal allowing them to participate in the capture of prey. It is a tremendous learning experience about nature, raptors, and their ecology. It is also a great way to get children outdoors in an activity that the whole family can enjoy.

What is the minimum age to become a falconer?

According to federal regulations, children must be at least 12 years old to become a falconer. All beginner falconers start as Apprentices; however, under Minnesota regulations, children between 12 to 16 years of age are listed as Junior Apprentices.

What are my responsibilities as their parent or guardian?

According to federal regulations, a parent or legal guardian must sign the permits for all children under the age of 18, and they must state that they are willing to take responsibility for all activities that occur under their child's permit. That includes hunting and training with the raptor, as well as, care and maintenance of the raptor. Additionally, in Minnesota, Junior Apprentices (permittees that are between 12 and 16 years of age) must house their raptor in the facilities of an adult falconry permittee, preferably their parent or legal guardian; therefore, it is recommended that at least one of the parents become a falconer as well.

Why do we require parental involvement and encourage parents to obtain permits themselves?

1. **Natural resource**—Falconry is the only sport that uses a trained wild animal. These wild predators are a valuable natural resource, so falconers must use wise conservation practices in the pursuit of their sport. The casual and uninformed novice may inadvertently, through ignorance or neglect, harm their raptor, themselves, and potentially discredit the sport. The DNR feels that birds should only be placed with those who are deeply motivated to practice falconry; otherwise, the raptor should be restored to the wild without delay.
2. **Dangerous**—Raptors are not pets, and they do not behave like parrots. They are predators, and as such they are inherently dangerous and are forever wild. Parents must be aware of the risks that their child is taking to pursue the sport, and they or another adult should closely attend the child any time the raptor is handled or flown.

3. **Daily care and maintenance**—Children mature at different ages and their attention for a hobby may wane as cars, school, sports, and social lives take precedence—but their raptor will still require daily care, and this may fall to you. Raptors have specific dietary requirements and must be weighed daily. They should be flown daily during the hunting season. Training must take place in an area that has adequate space to accommodate the raptor’s flight pattern and prey type—this may not describe your back yard. Their facilities and equipment requirements must be purchased and maintained according to federal regulations. The raptors must be maintained in a healthy and safe environment, which means their facilities must be cleaned regularly.
4. **Veterinarian and seasonal care**—Although they may be wild, the raptors should be taken to a vet regularly. You should know what a sick raptor looks like. You should know when their feathers or beak need maintenance. You should know the type of perches that the bird must have for its species and size to prevent debilitating foot injuries. You should know how much a raptor should weigh, and how much they should be fed (this may change in the winter). In the winter, you should know if the raptor needs an extra heat source or alternatively needs to be brought into the house. In the summer, you should know if they have adequate ventilation.
5. **Junior Apprentices**—Because of the specific and specialized care noted previously, Junior Apprentices must keep their raptor at the facilities of a permitted adult falconer. This could be in the facilities of any permitted adult falconer, but to become truly proficient, a Junior Apprentice should care for and maintain their own animals. Therefore, the DNR prefers that a parent or guardian become a falconer as well. To become a falconer, you would need to go through the same steps as your child--take the exam, find a sponsor (please be aware sponsors may only have 3 apprentices at a time, so your child’s sponsor, may not be able to sponsor you), include a facilities inspection (if you and your child share facilities, you do not need get a separate inspection), and apply for the permit. For more information, see the “Steps to Become a Falconer” Factsheet.

What else should I know?

1. Read the attached state and federal regulations for falconry. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the regulations, falconry, or these factsheets, please contact the Falconry Coordinator, Heidi Cyr, at heidi.cyr@state.mn.us or 651-259-5107.
2. For Junior Apprentices (JA), if their parent is also an Apprentice, only one bird may be obtained at a time, but both falconers may fly the bird. Initially, Apprentices and JA’s may only take a red-tailed hawk.
3. JA’s will automatically become Apprentices on their 16th birthday, but to become a General Falconer, an Apprentice must meet federal and state requirements. Please review item number 12 in the “Steps to Become a Falconer” factsheet for information on upgrading.
4. A raptor may only be registered to one person at a time; therefore, in terms of upgrades, the raptor will only count as a season of experience for whoever it is registered to. That means the other falconer may have a longer apprentice period until they have the required seasons of experience as well. Therefore, thought should be given to who lists the raptor under their name. Example:

- A. A 12 year old JA and their parent who is an Apprentice have a passage red-tailed hawk. The hawk is listed under the adult's permit.
- B. In 2 seasons and with their sponsor's approval, the adult Apprentice Falconer could become a General Falconer. The adult could then have their own bird (any species that a General Falconer is allowed to have) and their now 14 year old JA could have their own red-tailed hawk.
- C. In 2 more seasons, the JA would be 16 and would become an Apprentice (as an Apprentice with two seasons of experience, they could have any species raptor allowed for Apprentices under federal regulations for an Apprentice Falconer and under M.R. 6238.1200, subpart 16). The adult would now have 2 seasons of experience as a General Falconer, and they could take over as their child's sponsor (this is particularly good if there are younger siblings who would also like to become a falconer).
- D. In two years the child, who is now 18, could become a General Falconer with the approval of their sponsor.