**Section 1590.80 Falconry Permits – Classes and Standards**

a) Apprentice Class Falconer

1) Permittees shall be at least 14 years of age. An applicant under 18 years of age must have a parent or legal guardian sign the application. The parent or legal guardian will be legally responsible for the activities of the permittee. The permittee's raptor facilities must pass inspection by the Department before a permit is granted.

2) An apprentice falconer must have a letter from a sponsor possessing a valid master falconry or general falconry permit, issued by a state, tribe or territory, who is at least 18 years old and has at least 2 years experience at the general falconer level, stating that he or she will assist the apprentice, as necessary, in learning about the husbandry and training of wild raptors held for falconry, learning about the relevant wildlife laws and regulations, and deciding what species of raptor is appropriate for the apprentice to possess. A sponsor who wishes to withdraw sponsorship of an apprentice class permittee must notify the apprentice via a registered letter and provide the Department with a copy of the letter and receipt showing the letter was received. The apprentice shall have 45 days from the date of the letter to secure another sponsor or shall forfeit his or her permit.

3) An apprentice falconer may possess no more than one raptor and may obtain no more than two replacement raptors during any 12-month period. Any species of the order Falconiform or Strigiform may be possessed, including wild, captive-bred or hybrid individuals except a federal or State listed threatened or endangered species, prohibited species, white-tailed eagle (Haliaeetus albicilla), Steller's sea-eagle (Haliaeetus pelagicus), or golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos). A raptor taken from the wild as an eyass or that is imprinted on humans may not be possessed. A wild raptor can be transferred to an apprentice by another falconry permittee.

4) An apprentice falconer may take a raptor less than 1 year old, except an eyass, from the wild only while under the direct supervision of his or her falconry sponsor. Any Falconiform or Strigiform species may be taken from the wild, except a federal or State listed threatened or endangered species, prohibited species, white-tailed eagle, Steller's sea-eagle, golden eagle, American swallow-tailed kite (Elanoides forficatus), Swainson's hawk (Buteo swainsoni), peregrine falcon (Falco peregrines), flammulated owl (Otus flammeolus), elf owl (Micrathene whitneyi) and short-eared owl (Asio flammeus).

b) General Class Falconer

1) Permittees must be at least 16 years of age and have at least 2 years of licensed falconry experience at the apprentice class level. A person 16 or 17 years of age must have a parent or legal guardian sign the application, acknowledging that he or she will be legally responsible for the activities of the permittee.

2) The permittee shall submit a document from his or her sponsor to the Department stating that the permittee has practiced falconry with raptors at the apprentice falconer level or equivalent for at least 2 years, including maintaining, training, flying and hunting the raptors for at least 4 months in each year. That practice may include the capture or release of falconry raptors. No falconry school program or education may be substituted to shorten the period of 2 years at the apprentice level.

3) A general falconer shall possess no more than 3 raptors and may not obtain more than 2 replacement raptors during any 12-month period. In accordance with Section 1590.90(c) and (d), any Falconiform, Accipitriform or Strigiform species may be possessed, including wild, captive-bred or hybrid individuals except a prohibited species, a white-tailed eagle, a Steller's sea-eagle or a golden eagle. Permittees may possess captive-bred individuals and hybrids of species authorized to be possessed.

c) Master Class Falconer

1) A permittee must have at least 5 years of licensed experience practicing falconry with his or her own raptors at the general class falconer level and must submit a statement attesting to the same.

2) A master falconer shall possess no more than 5 wild raptors, and may not obtain more than 2 replacement raptors during any 12-month period. Permittees may possess any number of captive-bred raptors, however, all raptors must be trained in the pursuit of wild game and used in hunting. In accordance with subsection (c)(3) and Section 1590.90(c) and (d), any Falconiform, Accipitriform or Strigiform species may be possessed, including wild, captive-bred or hybrid individuals except those of a prohibited species.

3) A master falconer may possess up to 3 golden eagles, white-tailed eagles and Steller's sea-eagles in aggregate for use in falconry by providing the following to the Department:

A) A letter documenting experience in handling raptors, including information about the species handled and the type of duration of the activity in which the experience with eagles was gained.

B) At least 2 letters of reference from people with experience handling and/or flying large raptors such as eagles, ferruginous hawks (Buteo regalis), goshawks (Accipiter gentilis), or great-horned owls (Bubo virginianus). Each must contain a concise history of the author's experience with large raptors, which can include, but is not limited to, handling of raptors held by zoos, rehabilitating large raptors or scientific studies involving large raptors. Each letter must also assess the permittee's ability to care for eagles and fly them in falconry. Each eagle possessed will count as one of the raptors that can be possessed for use in falconry.

d) Upon completing the requirements needed to enter the next highest class, a falconer may submit a written request for an upgrade to the Department. The Department shall confirm the completion of all requirements and grant the request.

(Source: Amended at 38 Ill. Reg. 895, effective January 1, 2014)