

Goddess of the Hunt

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Kodiak resident Don Fox and his hunting goshawk, Artemis, visited the KMXT studios recently. Jay Barrett/KMXT photo

Jay Barrett/KMXT

The ancient art of falconry appears to be alive and well in Kodiak, with at least three practitioners hunting with their birds of prey. Jay Barrett has this story on a local man who just got back into the sport after more than 30 years.

The goshawk that Kodiak resident Don Fox has is big, even for an immature bird. It's not bald eagle big, but her wingspan is over a yard. Despite her size however, Artemis, as he calls her, weights not much more than two pounds. It's an appropriate name for a bird of prey - Artemis is the Greek goddess of the hunt.

Fox captured Artemis this spring.

-- (got her 31 sec "I got her May 25th ... two-and-a-half pounds at times.")

He says
falconry is very different than other hunting sports, mostly because of the
year-round commitment:

-- (24 7 pigeon intro 16 sec "It's
not like ... trap pigeons around town.")

Fox says he
traps the pigeons - of which there are an excess this year - because a goshawk,
which is a forest bird, isn't skilled at catching such fast birds out in the
open:

-- (hunting style 43 sec "For
a goshawk to catch ... ate the whole crow.")

Not just
anyone can go and trap a bird of prey and become a falconer. Fox says it takes
a lot of time and study:

-- (regs 55
sec "First thing you do is ...
free to go; trap a bird.")

Fox says
the only birds suitable for falconry native to Kodiak island are the goshawks. He
says there are nesting pairs all over the area, including some on Woody and
Holiday islands and out on the Coast Guard base. Birds from other areas can
also be brought onto the island by falconers:

-- (when to get them 23 sec "When
you first get into ... because they're hard to trap.")

One of the
difficulties of gathering a bird - besides climbing trees to get the chicks -
is fending off a protective parent. Fox says Artemis' mother swooped down and
struck him four times.

If you

don't happen to live in Fox's neighborhood, you probably won't catch Artemis hunting, but he regularly bring her to school classes.

I'm Jay
Barrett.

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