

short. Tail very deeply forked, of twelve feathers, the lateral ones extremely elongated.

Bill bluish-black above, light blue on the cere, and the edges of both mandibles. Edges of the eyelids light blue; iris black. Feet light blue, tinged with green; claws flesh-coloured. The head, the neck all round, and the under parts, are white, tinged with bluish-grey; the shafts of the head, neck, and breast blackish. The rest of the plumage is black, with blue and purple reflections.

Length 25 inches; extent of wings $51\frac{1}{2}$; beak along the back $1\frac{1}{4}$.

The female is similar to the male.

GENUS IX.—FALCO, *Linn.* FALCON.

Bill short, robust; its upper outline decurved from the base; cere short, bare; edge of upper mandible with a festoon and a prominent angular process. Nostrils round, with an internal ridge, ending in a central tubercle. Feet strong; tarsi moderate, reticulate; toes long, broadly scutellate, the anterior webbed at the base; claws long, well curved, very acute. Wings long, pointed; second quill longest, first and third nearly equal; outer toe abruptly cut out on the inner web. Tail rather long, nearly even.

THE ICELAND OR JER FALCON.

+FALCO ISLANDICUS, *Lath.*

PLATE XIX.—MALE AND FEMALE.

On the 6th August, 1833, while my young friends, THOMAS LINCOLN and JOSEPH COOLEGE, accompanied by my son JOHN, were rambling by the rushing waters of a brook banked by stupendous rocks, eight or ten miles from the port of Bras d'Or, on the coast of Labrador, they were startled by a loud and piercing shriek, which issued from the precipices above them. On looking up, my son observed a large hawk plunging over and about him. It was instantly brought to the ground. A second hawk dashed towards the dead one, as if determined to rescue it; but it quickly met the same fate, the contents of my son's second barrel bringing it to his feet.

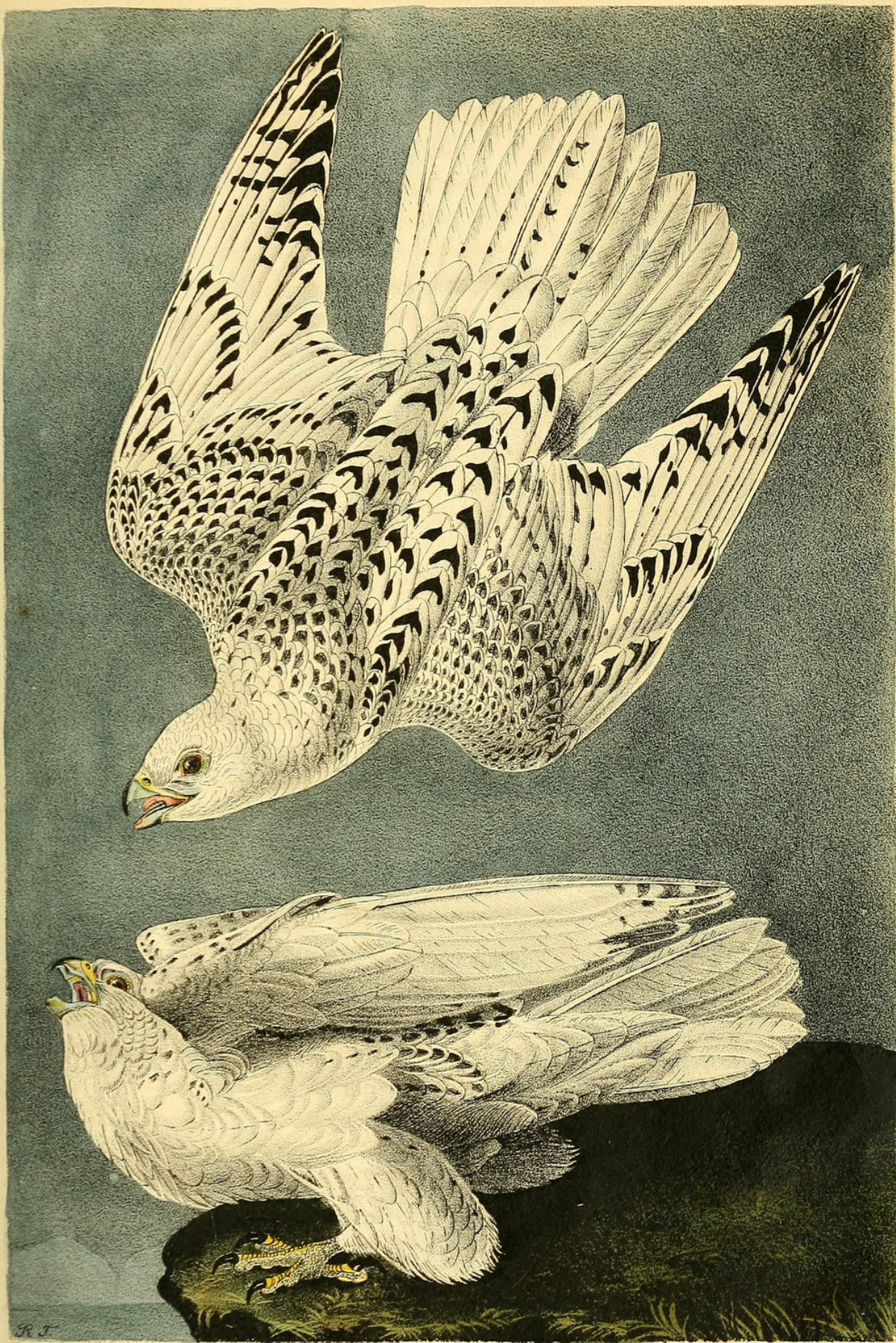
The nest of these hawks was placed on the rocks, about fifty feet from their summit, and more than a hundred from their base. Two other birds of the same species, and apparently in the same plumage, now left their eyry in the cliff, and flew off. The party having ascended by a circuitous and dangerous route, contrived to obtain a view of the nest, which, however, was empty. It was composed of sticks, sea-weeds, and mosses, about two feet in diameter, and almost flat. About its edges were strewed the remains of their food, and beneath, on the margin of the stream, lay a quantity of wings of the *Uria Troile*, *Mormon arcticus*, and *Tetrao Saliceti*, together with large pellets composed of fur, bones, and various substances.

My son and his companions returned towards evening. The two hawks which they had brought with them, I knew at once to be of a species which I had not before seen, at least in America. Think not that I laid them down at once—No, reader, I attentively examined every part of them. Their eyes, which had been carefully closed by the young hunters, I opened, to observe their size and colour. I drew out their powerful wings, distended their clenched talons, looked into their mouths, and admired the sharp tooth-like process of their upper mandible. I then weighed them in my hand, and at length concluded that no Hawk that I had ever before handled, looked more like a great Peregrine Falcon.

Their flight resembled that of the Peregrine Falcon, but was more elevated, majestic, and rapid. They rarely sailed when travelling to and fro, but used a constant beat of their wings. When over the Puffins, and high in the air, they would hover almost motionless, as if watching the proper moment to close their pinions, and when that arrived, they would descend almost perpendicularly on their unsuspecting victims.

Their cries also resembled those of the Peregrine Falcon, being loud, shrill, and piercing. Now and then they would alight on some of the high stakes placed on the shore as beacons to the fishermen who visit the coast, and stand for a few minutes, not erect like most other Hawks, but in the position of a Lestris or Tern, after which they would resume their avocations, and pounce upon a Puffin, which they generally did while the poor bird was standing on the ground at the very entrance of its burrow, apparently quite unaware of the approach of its powerful enemy. The Puffin appeared to form no impediment to the flight of the Hawk, which merely shook itself after rising in the air, as if to arrange its plumage, as the Fish Hawk does when it has emerged from the water with a fish in its talons.

These Falcons were all that were seen of this species during our expedition, and I am inclined to think that this bird must be rare in that part of Labrador. On dissecting the two killed, I found them to be a male and a female, and saw that the latter had laid eggs that season. It is therefore



Iceland or Gyr Falcon.

Drawn from Nature by J. J. Audubon.

Lith. & Printed & Col. by J. T. Bowen, Boston.

probable that the two which left the nest at the approach of the party were the young birds.

I made my drawing of them the day after their death. It was one of the severest tasks which I ever performed, and was done under the most disagreeable circumstances. I sat up nearly the whole of the night, to sketch them in outline. The next day it rained for hours, and the water fell on my paper and colours all the while from the rigging of the Ripley.

The weight of the female was 3 pounds 2 ounces, that of the male 2 pounds 14 ounces avoirdupois. Their flesh was tough and bluish, and their whole structure was remarkable for the indications of strength which it exhibited. The intestines measured 4 feet 9 inches. The heart was extremely large, and very remarkable for its firmness. The liver also was large. The stomach, which was thin, contained remains of fish, feathers, and hair.

From the account which I received from my son and his companions, I would willingly suppose that no one had ever before disturbed their solitude. They flew about and close to them, as if altogether unacquainted with the effects of a gun. The young appeared full grown, and, as if aware of the fate of their parents, alighted only on the highest and most inaccessible parts of the rocks around. Both the specimens procured were carefully skinned and preserved. One is in my possession; the other I gave to my worthy and generous friend JOHN BACHMAN.

On inquiring of a Mr. JONES, who had been a resident in Labrador for twenty years, I was informed that these Hawks feed on and destroy an immense number of hares, Rock Partridges, and Willow Grouse; but he could not give me any information as to the change of plumage, never having seen them in any other state than that of the individuals represented in my plate, which I shewed to him. The fishermen called them Duck Hawks, and some of them reported many exploits performed by them, which I think it unnecessary to repeat, as I considered them exaggerated.

FALCO ISLANDICUS, *Jer Falcon*, Rich. and Swains. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 27.

GYR FALCON, *Falco Islandicus*, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 51.

ICELAND OR JER FALCON, *Falco Islandicus*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iv. p. 466. Adult Female.

ICELAND OR JER FALCON, *Falco Islandicus*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. ii. p. 552. Young Male and Female.

The bill is very pale blue, the extremity of the upper mandible black, that of the lower yellowish; the eyes greyish-black; the cere, superciliary ridge, edges of eyelids, tarsi and toes, pale yellow; the eyelids pale blue; the claws black. The plumage is pure white, but all the feathers of the back and rump, the scapulars, the wing-coverts, and the secondary quills, have near their

extremity a brownish-black spot, generally arrow-shaped. The anterior feathers of the back have, moreover, a black streak on the shaft, which on those farther back becomes larger and lanceolate, and on the rump is accompanied by a third spot; the larger coverts and secondary quills have also three or more spots, and the primary quills have seven spots or partial bars toward their extremity, besides a large subterminal black space, their tips however being white. On the inner margin of the two middle tail-feathers are eight, and on the outer four dusky spots, and their shafts are also dusky, as are those of all the quills on their upper surface. There are also a few slight lanceolate dark spots on the sides of the body, and on the tibial feathers.

Length to end of tail $23\frac{1}{2}$ inches, to end of wings $21\frac{1}{2}$, to end of claws $18\frac{3}{4}$, to carpal joint $5\frac{1}{2}$; extent of wings $51\frac{1}{4}$.

THE GREAT-FOOTED HAWK.

+ *FALCO PEREGRINUS*, Gmel.

PLATE XX.—MALE AND FEMALE.

The French and Spaniards of Louisiana have designated all the species of the genus *Falco* by the name of "*Mangeurs de Poulets*;" and the farmers in other portions of the Union have bestowed upon them, according to their size, the appellations of "Hen Hawk," "Chicken Hawk," "Pigeon Hawk," &c. This mode of naming these rapacious birds is doubtless natural enough, but it displays little knowledge of the characteristic manners of the species. No bird can better illustrate the frequent inaccuracy of the names bestowed by ignorant persons than the present, of which, on referring to the plate, you will see a pair enjoying themselves over a brace of ducks of different species. Very likely, were tame ducks as plentiful on the plantations in our States, as wild ducks are on our rivers, lakes and estuaries, these hawks might have been named by some of our settlers "*Mangeurs de Canards*."

Look at these two pirates eating their *dejeuné à la fourchette*, as it were, congratulating each other on the savouriness of the food in their grasp. One might think them epicures, but they are in fact gluttons. The male has obtained possession of a Green-winged Teal, while his mate has procured a Gadwal Duck. Their appetites are equal to their reckless daring, and they well deserve the name of "Pirates," which I have above bestowed upon them.



Iceland or Gyr Falcon.

Drawn from Nature by J. J. Audouin.

Lith. & Printed & Col. by J. T. Bowen, London.



Audubon, John James. 1840. "The Iceland or Jer Falcon, *Falco islandicus*, Lath. [Pl. 19]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 1, 81–84. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319132>.

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