

**LAUREN  
MUELLER  
McGOUGH**  
**1987-**



**THE  
LOVE  
OF  
EAGLES**

Dr. Lauren McGough is a falconer and anthropologist that has dedicated her life to the art and practice of hunting in partnership with eagles. Falconry has been instrumental in informing our understanding of birds of prey and their conservation.

In 2000, while the 13-year-old was reading Steve Bodio's "A Rage For Falcons", she discovered photos of Kazakh hunters in Mongolia: men on horseback, with Golden Eagles crouched on their fists. She instantly wanted to become a falconer. While corresponding with Bodio, he told her stories of hunting foxes with the nomads. When Lauren was seventeen, she traveled with her father, an Air Force stealth pilot at Tinker Air Force Base, to Mongolia to meet Kazakh golden eagle handlers for the first time. Bodio helped them make the contacts.

In 2005, Lauren graduated from Putnam City North High School. As an exchange student at the University of Glasgow, Scotland for two years, she learned the European tradition of eagle falconry. In 2009 she graduated from the University of Oklahoma with bachelor degrees in zoology and international studies. On a Fulbright Scholarship, she went to back to Mongolia for a year, where she apprenticed with local masters and trained eagles on horseback.

She hired a Kazakh translator to live with her to overcome her language difficulties. When she returned to Mongolia in 2012 to work on her doctoral dissertation, she could speak enough "caveman Kazakh" to get by. She earned a Ph.D. in social anthropology at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland in 2019.

Lauren brought the eagle training techniques she learned back to America, where she teaches rehabilitating golden eagles how to hunt. Through falconry, these eagles gain the fitness, confidence and skills they need to live a long life in the wild.

One of her most famous rehabilitation success stories is Miles. For the first 13 years of his life, he grew up in rehabilitation centers, and lacked the hunting skills raptors naturally develop. After U.S. Fish and Wildlife seized him from the poacher, he was passed from rehabber to rehabber, unable to hunt and prone to bullying people for scraps. He likely would have stayed that way if it weren't for McGough.

McGough, who listened to Miles Davis before each training session to prepare her to handle the moody bird, taught him to fly like an eagle again. She watches him do the most extreme aerial aerobatics in an attempt to catch prey, and watch the prey execute the most incredible maneuvers in order to evade its predator. This timeless dance plays out thousands of times daily in the wild.

In 2017, Dr. McGough was named the executive director of the Falconry Fund, a nonprofit organization focused on the conservation and preservation of raptors. She works on rehabilitating eagles that are found sick and unable to hunt. When one is injured in the wild and is in need of rehabilitation, falconry is a good surrogate to teach a bird of prey how to thrive in the wild again.

In the most basic description of her passions, Lauren McGough appreciates flight. She is a skydiver and pilot-in-training. She is also a connoisseur of the mechanics to the greatest flight masters of our planet – birds of prey.