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Remembering J LINDSAY OAKS

By J David Remple

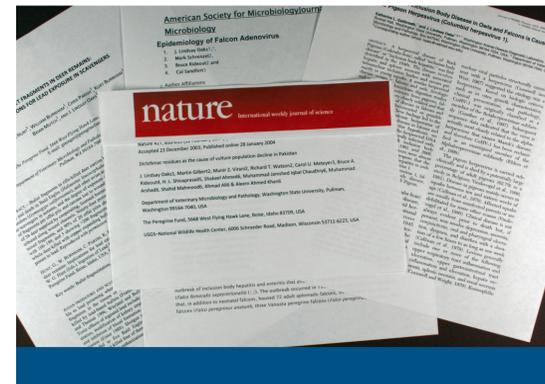
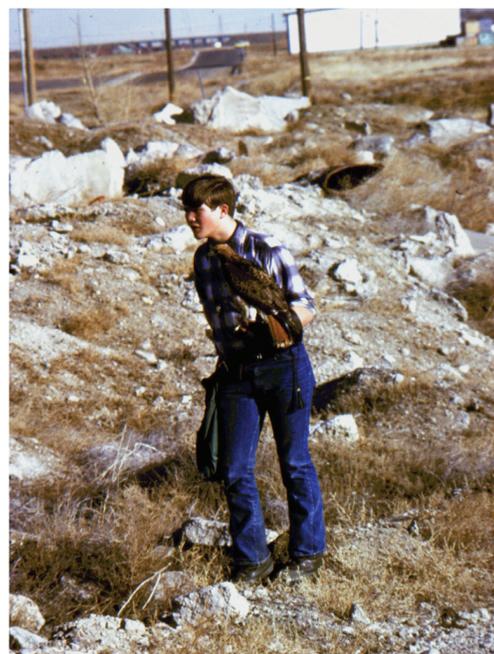


FALCONRY AND CONSERVATION MEDICINE LOST A CHAMPION WHEN J. LINDSAY OAKS, DVM, PhD PASSED AWAY ON JANUARY 15, 2011.

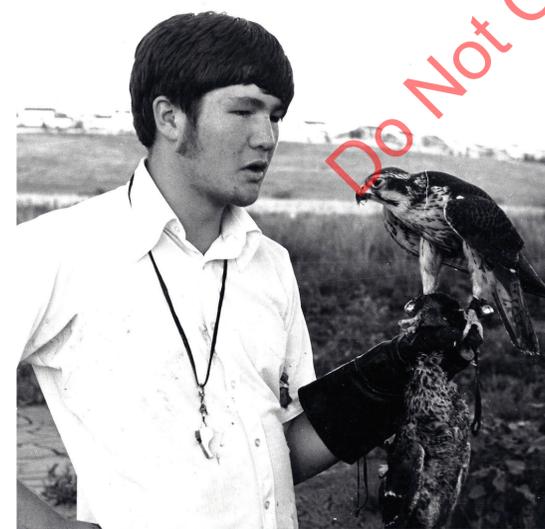
Though cut short at the peak of his illustrious career, Lindsay enjoyed a life filled with internationally recognized scientific acclaim, lofty academic achievement, adventure, world travel, and throngs of friends and admirers. Lindsay was a devout outdoor sportsman, and his passions were fishing and falconry. The research discoveries he made etched his name in the field of conservation medicine. The most instantly recognizable attribute of Lindsay's character was his quiet and modest demeanor, which endeared him to students, colleagues, and friends.

It was late November 1977, at the annual Meet of the North American Falconers Association in Alamosa, Colorado, that young Lindsay Oaks first stepped onto the stage of American falconry. Long caravans of cars followed this shy and reticent "kid" each day to see his spectacular bird do her thing, and never was anyone disappointed. Still, Lindsay seemed awkward amongst the admiring throngs; "I thought all falcons did this," he later confessed. When it came to falconry, he was a natural-born master.

His love of falcons and horses led to the decision to pursue a career in veterinary medicine. Dr. Lindsay Oaks earned his DVM at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences in 1986. After graduation, Lindsay joined our staff at the Dubai Falcon Hospital, in the Arabian Gulf Emirate of Dubai. Here he enjoyed the dual opportunity for veterinary equine work as well as the opportunity for research and medical work on falcons. As a bonus, Dubai offered more than ample time for falconry, and the azure waters of the Gulf provided world-class fishing. Lindsay was in his element.



LINDSAY'S RESEARCH
DISCOVERIES AND
CONTRIBUTIONS TO
RAPTOR CONSERVATION
WERE MONUMENTAL.



Lindsay's personality and sense of humor endeared him to everyone. The exuberant spectrum of expatriate life (dinner parties, dates, and the good times in 'paradise') had been opened to Lindsay, and he took full advantage of it all. Many close friendships were forged, some lasting the remainder of his life. While Lindsay's assistance at Dubai Falcon Hospital was invaluable, it was the rich times we shared, flying his miniscule male Barbary Falcon (Lindsay named him "Conan the Barbary") at doves and partridge, hunting together in the desert, consuming red-hot Indian and Pakistani curries till the sweat rolled off our brows, and downing pints of cold beer by the pool and tennis courts in the evenings, that I will always cherish and remember.

Lindsay returned to the states in September 1989 to pursue post-graduate education and training in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State University. After receiving his PhD in veterinary microbiology, he joined the faculty of the veterinary college, where he began his distinguished career. Lindsay lectured many courses, led the veterinary microbiology training program, and was course director for veterinary virology.

Lindsay's research discoveries and contributions to raptor conservation were monumental. As a consulting veterinarian to the Peregrine Fund, Lindsay discovered the cause of high mortality in captive-bred, newly-hatched Aplomado Falcon chicks, a virus that had threatened to wipe out the breeding effort of that species. He also highlighted the role of lead as a factor contributing to the mortality of endangered California Condors.

Lindsay and coworkers were the first to prove pigeon herpes virus (PHV), owl herpes virus (OHV), and falcon herpes virus (FHV) were the same virus, a question that had bothered avian virus researchers for decades.

However, the outstanding discovery that placed Dr. Lindsay Oaks in the spotlight of world acclaim and carved his name in the annals of conservation medicine forever was the elucidation of the role of diclofenac, an aspirin-like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, in the devastating decline of Gyps vultures in Asia and Africa. His work provided the insight that led the way in saving these species from extinction. He discovered the carcasses (human and animal) the vultures were feeding upon contained residual amounts of the widely used drug. And as he suspected, vultures being at the top of 'that' food chain, were accumulating toxic amounts of diclofenac and dying of kidney failure. He had cracked the mystery that had stumped researchers worldwide!

Lindsay was also a devoted and loving father, who skillfully managed to balance his time between his busy professional life and the care of his three beautiful young children, Gilbert, Gillian and Sara. Lindsay's children were everything to him, and he delighted in sharing his love of fishing with the "kids". Lindsay had an impact on many people, and the friends he left spanned the globe. Scientists in Pakistan, Asia and Africa, his students and colleagues at Washington State University, his friends and staff at the Peregrine Fund, and many in the falconry community, will be forever remember him, his life, and his work.

Lindsay was a skilled and trusted ally. As a long term member of the Peregrine Fund family, he was our "go to" responder on a variety of serious issues: environmental contaminants, diseases, and on site biosecurity for our endangered species breeding program. When we learned of the devastating decline of three species of Gyps vultures, we sought his assistance. Always a team player, his work with The Peregrine Fund helped save these vultures from extinction.

-J. Peter Jenny, President, The Peregrine Fund



Lindsay loved his three beautiful children,
Gilbert, Gillian and Sara.

