

Obtaining land owner's permission

You should always know your state's laws concerning where you can legally hunt. In some states, unless property is otherwise posted, you may hunt there. However, in New York, where I live, the opposite is true. All land is presumed to be private property unless you know otherwise, and have permission of the land owner to be there. While verbal permission is adequate, written permission is better, and gives you something to show the DEC officers if you are stopped.

But how to obtain it? First, determine who actually owns the land you would like to hunt. Nothing is more embarrassing than finding out the person you've been trying to persuade doesn't actually own the land. You can check town property records if you have any doubts.

Then, go pay them a visit at a convenient time for them. Bring your bird. The bird is your ambassador and will open doors for you. Introduce yourself, and show your licenses. This demonstrates that you are a responsible person engaging in a legal, respectable, and regulated sport.

Emphasize that you will not be using firearms, and (unless they have poultry or pet rabbits on the property) that you and your bird present no danger to them. Then I offer them a copy of a small form I've typed up, requesting permission to hunt their land. Their copy of this also acts as a type of waiver, as you will see. I include my own info, and my vehicle description, so they can recognize my car on their property. I also ask if there are any limits they would like to set, such as "no hunting on certain days, or between certain hours", or in one case, "Just call first and tell us you're coming". If they seem reticent about allowing you to hunt their property, propose they accompany you on a falconry hunt, so they can see what happens. Most folks welcome the chance, and will bring their cameras.

Needless to say, once you've obtained permission, do not abuse it. Respect their property, and while it is usually acceptable to bring along a few friends to watch you hunt, you may not extend the permission they gave you to others in your absence.

Avoid hunting near a residence. Not so much for their sake, but for yours. Your bird may spot something in a window, and go flying into the glass. Also try to stay away from any fence or barrier to large for you to climb over. Your bird may fly over it, and you'll have no way to follow and retrieve it. This also applies to bodies of water. If your bird can cross it, but you can't, avoid the area.

Here is the sort of paper I offer land owners.: Keep the original in your records, and one copy on your person, along with your licenses, to be produced if needed.

Land owner's copy:

Dear _____,

My name is _____, and I am a state and federally licensed falconer. I am requesting permission to practice falconry on your property. This is the ancient art of using trained birds of prey to capture small game. No firearms or other weapons are used at any time. I understand that I am responsible for my own safety and that of my bird. I will respect your property and understand that I am liable for any damage I may cause. Thank you for the privilege of practicing falconry on your land.

(my name)

(falconry license number)

(my phone number)

(my vehicle make, model, color, and license plate number)

(my signature and date)

my copy:

I, _____, residing at _____ do
grant permission to _____ to practice falconry on my property located
at _____.

Signature and date _____

(restrictions, if any:)