

A KYRGHIZ EAGLE HUNTER

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A Kyrgyz

eagle-hunter doesn't hunt for eagles to eat. He hunts *with* an eagle he has trained from infancy to hunt food for his family.

Female eagles adapt to training the best and are fierce huntresses. Retrieved as a young chick from their mother's nest when she's out hunting, it takes one or two years to train them. The eagle the hunter is holding is age six. When they are too old to hunt at around age 20, they are released back into the wild, where they can live free for up to age 50.

That would be among the high rock outcroppings dotting the high grasslands of Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. That's where the hunter's assistant (usually his son) climbs up with the eagle gripping his forearm high enough to launch. Upon the hunter waves the command on horseback, the hood is removed from the eagle's head so he can see and is released.

Soaring high, the eagle searches for game like rabbits which are plentiful in the grasslands. Upon spotting one, the eagle swoops down to snare it on the run with her amazingly powerful talons. Allowing her to eat a bite or two as her reward, she's re-hooded and the rabbit soon to be on the family dinner table. If you want to see this for yourself, come with us to Kyrgyzstan on our next exploration of Central Asia. (*Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World* #228 photo ©Jack Wheeler)

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