

Opposable thumbs are great, but zygodactyl toes are even better!!

Description



The Ohio School of Falconry just â??schooledâ?• our New School Montessori 4th-6th graders on interesting facts about falcons, hawks and owls. This presentation coincided with studentsâ?? study of Jean Craighead Georgeâ??s book, My Side of the Mountain about a boy surviving in the wilderness with the help of his peregrine falcon.

The bird handlers shared interesting information about each of the 5 types of birds they brought with them and presented the material with many questions for students to resolve through logic.

For instance:

Barn owlsâ?? siblings nudge them from the nest and they float down to the ground.

- **Question:** When owlets are too young to fly, how do they make their way up to the safety of the nest?
- **Answer:** Their zygodactyl toes (and their sharp beak) help them climb the tree. When older, those toes strongly grip the 1,000 mice they catch and eat per year.

Peregrine falcons eat lots of pigeons every year, yet they cannot fly as fast as a pigeon. The falcons are freakishly careful about keeping their feathers in perfect order and they can see something the size of a tennis ball from over a mile away.

- **Question:** How on earth can a peregrine falcon catch up to a pigeon to eat it?
- **Answer:** They reduce air drag with perfectly â??coiffedâ?• feathers and because of their amazing vision, they can fly high, drop, and use the power of gravity to increase their speed as they â??fallâ?• with precision to stun and paralyze their prey.

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Students watched as the birds flew among the crowd from gloved hand to gloved hand.

- **Question:** If these birdsâ?? claws have the crushing power equal to a crocodileâ??s jaw, why donâ??t they destroy their handlerâ??s hands?
- **Answer:** The birds trust their handlers and arenâ??t afraid.

What better way to learn about animals, physics, logic and the power of trusting relationships than through this amazing conversation between students, presenters and the animals themselves. We are so grateful for this lesson.

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