

# Ray Shaw — Wildlife Artist

by Nancy Howard  
San Diego, California

"I used to dream about catching hawks," said Ray Shaw, a San Diego-based wildlife artist. "Now I paint them."

Ray Shaw paints hawks and practically any other kind of bird you can imagine. His main work today is with Feathers 'n Fabrics, his own company founded with partner Bob Howard. This one-year-old company specializes in presenting Shaw's paintings through silk-screening on an assortment of T-shirts, sweatshirts, and ladies cover-ups. The main designs are of birds of prey, exotics, and birds that habitat near the ocean. Shops in Arizona, California,

Nevada, Indiana, New Jersey, Canada, and most recently Sea World of San Diego are selling shirts displaying Shaw's work.

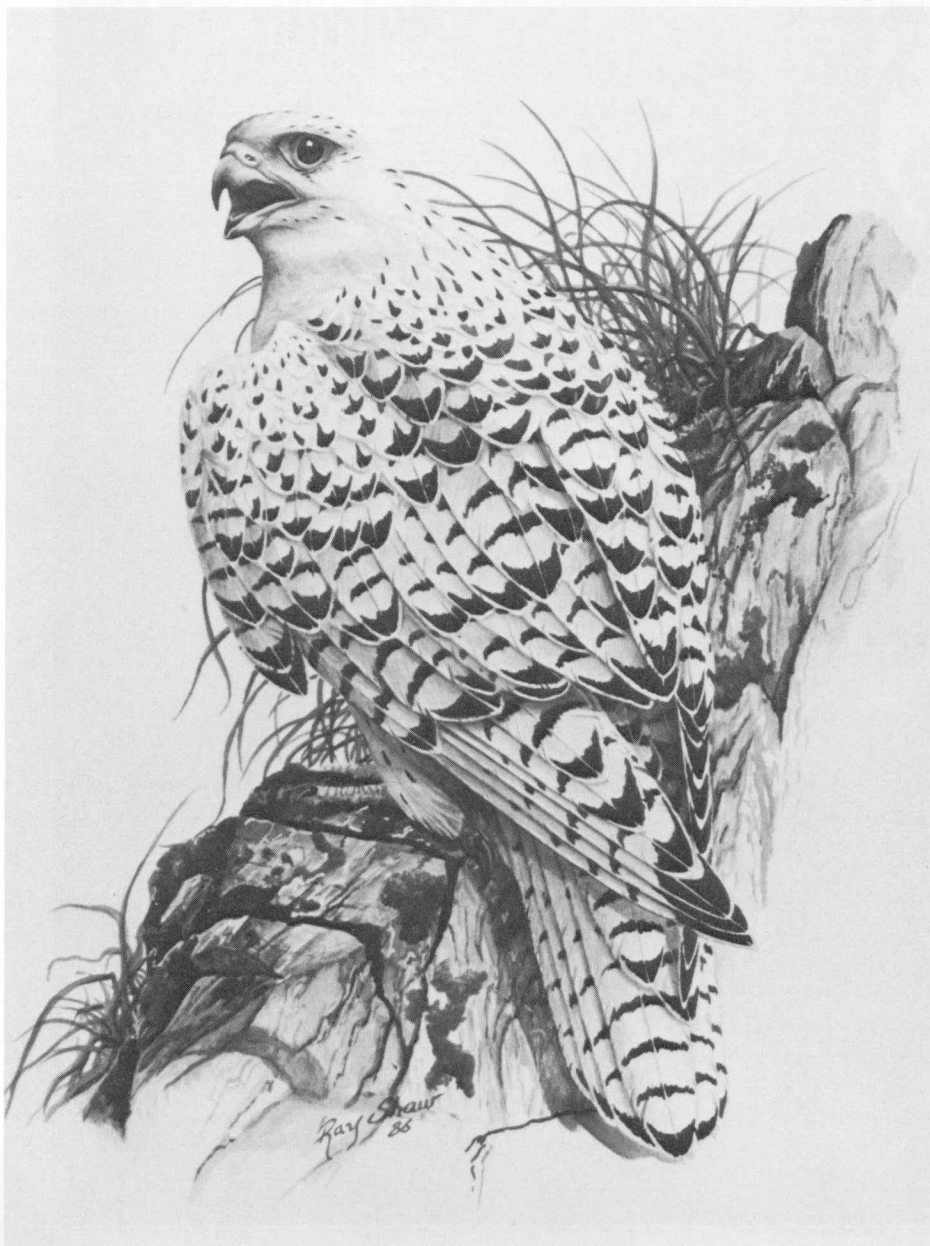
Shaw's keen interest in birds began at an early age. He was raised in Utah where birds of prey abound. His first contact with these birds occurred when he was ten years old. Walking home from school one day, he saw his first captured birds of prey, a red-tail hawk and a goshawk.

Two college students had captured these birds and were handling them in their backyard. From that day on, Shaw spent his time learning about birds. The

two students taught him to make traps. He wanted to capture his own hawk. Shaw tried unsuccessfully for three years to capture any kind of bird. Then, when he was 13, he caught his first bird of prey.

Shaw spotted a nest in a tall poplar tree near his home. He told his father about the nest, and asked him to help capture the birds. His father refused saying it was too dangerous. Two days later Shaw was awakened by his father early in the morning. "Let's go catch a hawk," he said to Ray.

His father helped gather a rope and net to catch the birds. Shaw was half-



*Gyr Falcon*



*California condor*

way up the tree when the young hawks flew out of the nest and into a nearby field. Shaw hurried down the tree and crept out to the field. He threw his net and caught a red-tail hawk on the first try.

After this capture, Shaw said it seemed like birds just "fell in my lap." In the next three years he had captured or found over 100 birds. Living on three acres of land with his family, Shaw had the use of the old barns and coops where he could keep the birds. He also raised rabbits, pheasants and chickens to feed the birds he captured.

Some of the birds he found were wounded. Shaw would nurse them back to health and release them. In fact, he never kept his birds for very long. He released them back to the wild where he felt they belonged.

*See ad on page 5*

Shaw was becoming known for his interest and experience with the birds of prey. Classes from the local schools had field trips to his home. In the ninth grade, a teacher talked him into entering the local science fair. With several of his books and a great-horned owl on display, Shaw answered questions about the birds of prey. He won first place and a write up in the Sunday paper with a picture of him and his display.

Because of the large number of birds he had and the fact that he was becoming well-known, Shaw began to worry about the Fish and Game Department. It was against the law to do what he was doing.

One day a Fish and Game truck drove up to his home. In the front yard were 16 perches with an assortment of birds on them. Shaw thought this was the end of his birds. The man got out of his truck and asked to look around. Shaw showed him what he was doing. As they walked back to the truck, the man turned and said, "It looks like you're doing a good job." Then he got into his truck and drove away.

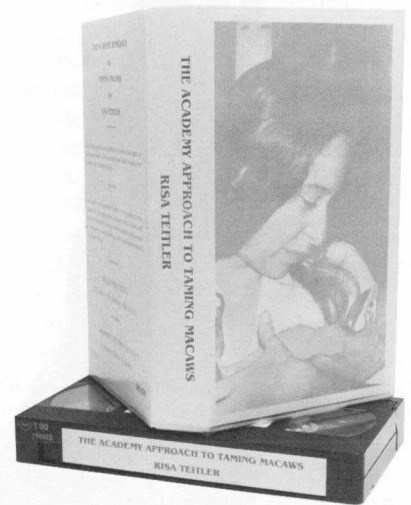
Later Shaw learned that the Fish and Game had known about him and had been referring people who had found wounded birds to him for sometime.

The refuge for the birds of prey ended when his family had to move to Maryland. In Maryland, people called young Shaw the "bird man." This time it was not because of the birds he had captured, but the birds he was painting. His personal experience with birds gave his paintings detail that made his work exceptional.

At 19, Shaw joined the navy. For two years he worked as a hull technician. He painted to pass the time on the long trips aboard ship. His reputation grew and when he asked to be the ship's artist he was accepted. With an office larger than the admiral's, he painted for two years for admirals and captains in the 7th Naval Fleet.

When Shaw got out of the navy he came to San Diego. In 1981, he began painting in Old Town in a local shop. He stayed there for five years painting in front of tourists.

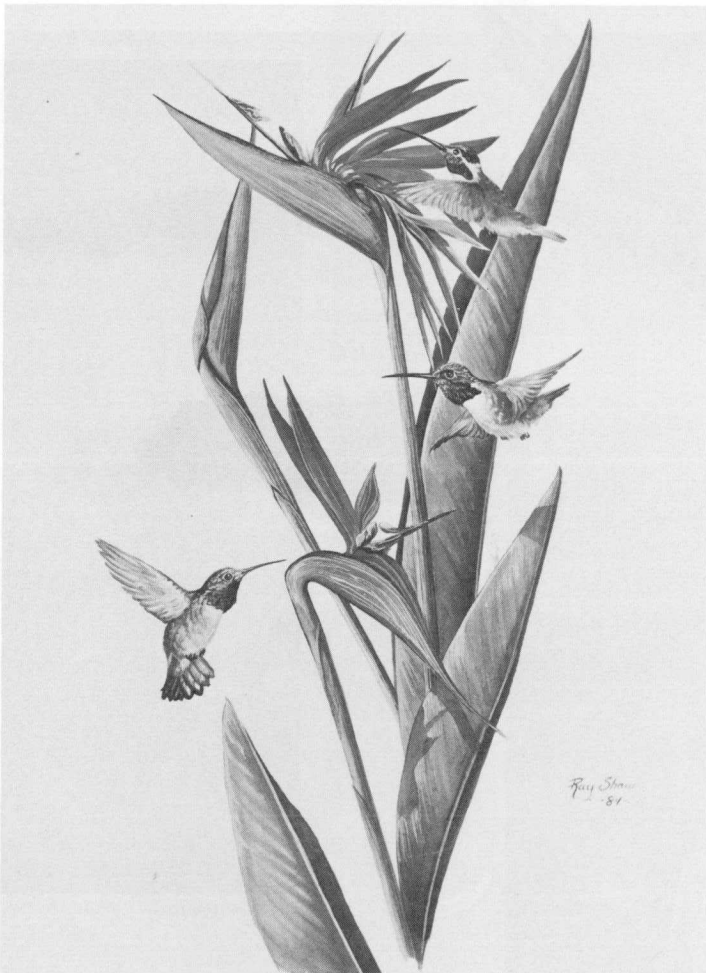
It was here that Shaw met Bob Howard, a local merchant, who recognized Shaw's talent. The two became friends and interested in promoting the artwork. That was when Feathers 'n Fabrics was founded. The two decided to research the best way to reproduce the paintings onto shirts. They found by using a photo-screen process for shirt



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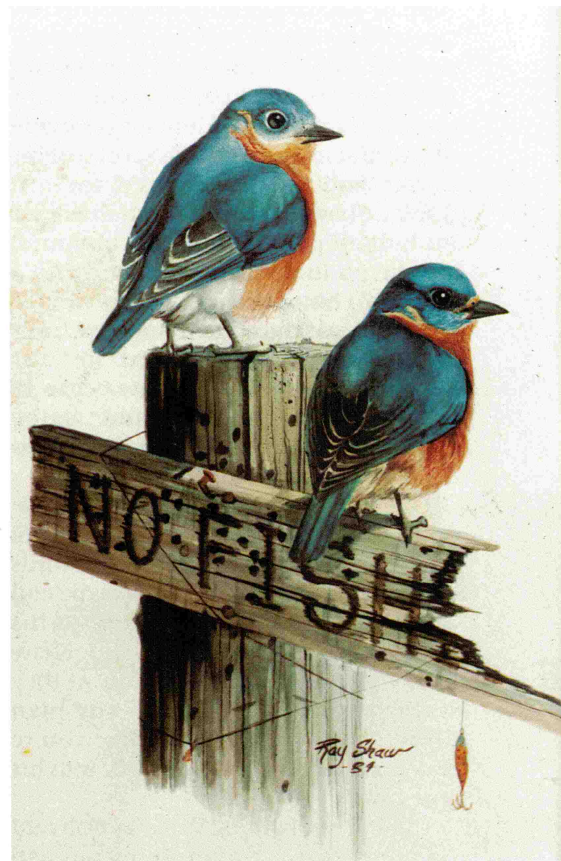
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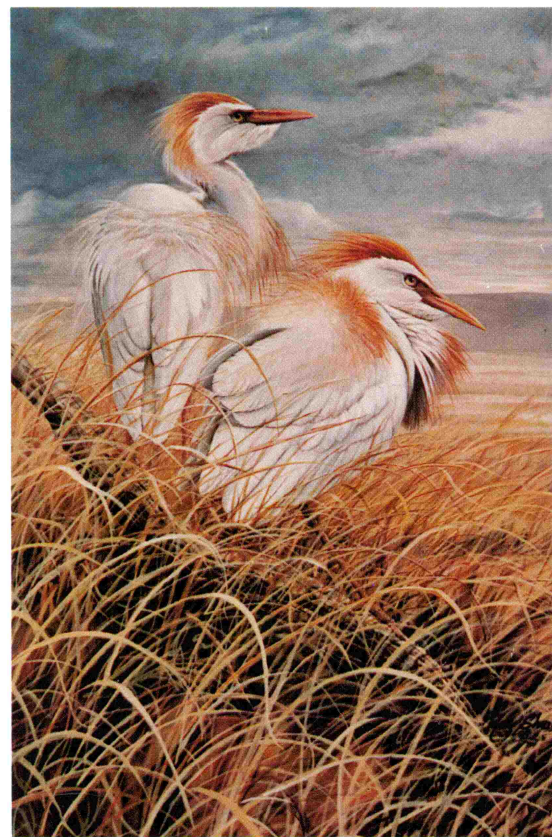
*Bald eagle*



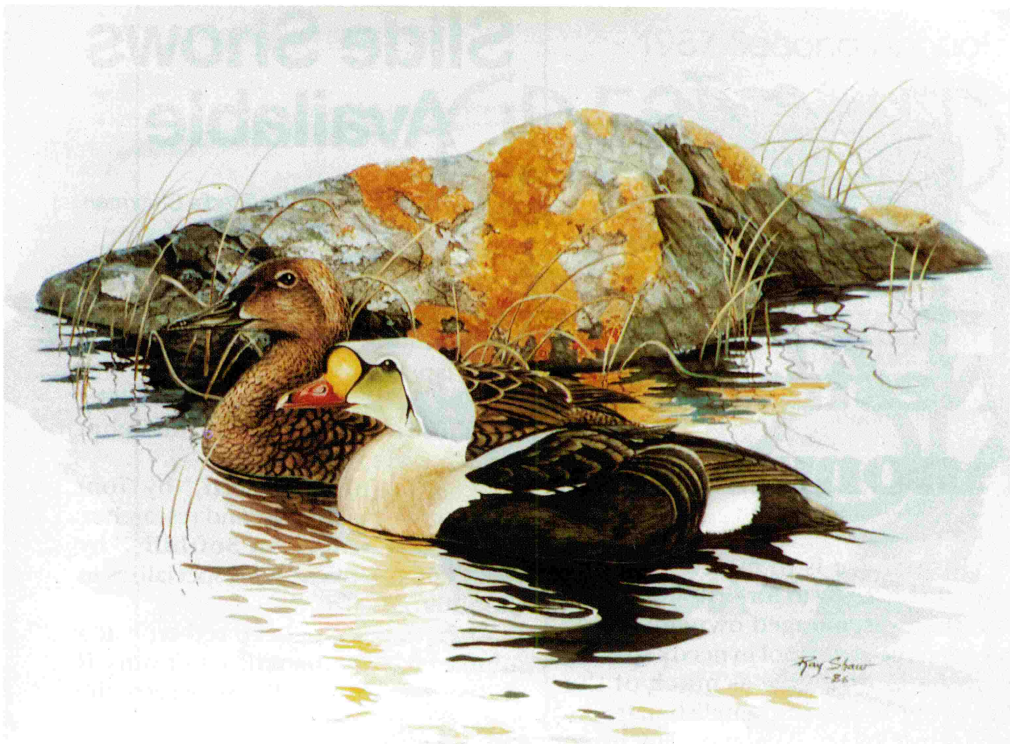
*Eastern bluebirds*



*Horned puffins*



*Cattle egrets*



King eiders

Shaw's designs exceptional.

Ray Shaw is pleased to be able to continue his painting and maintain his contact with other bird lovers through his business. Recently at a falconer's meet Hal Webster, author of the number one falconer's book *North American Falconry*, saw Shaw's shirts. He approached Shaw to illustrate his next book. Shaw was elated not only for the offer, but to be able to discuss birds with one of the foremost authorities in the field.

Shaw's interest in birds also includes exotics. Whether on business calls to pet shops or selling shirts at a bird show, you can find him discussing aspects of the care and handling of exotics. He became familiar with exotics since he has had an assortment of them since 1983. Afton, a yellow naped Amazon parrot, was obtained like most of his other birds would be. He traded his artwork for the bird. To receive Afton he painted a 12-foot submarine sandwich for a food shop in El Cajon, California.

With the success of Feathers 'n Fabrics, Shaw plans to continue mixing the pleasure of painting with the business of selling shirts for as long as he can. ●

screening, as well as half-tones, it gave the shirts a most realistic appearance. The cost was a little more, but the

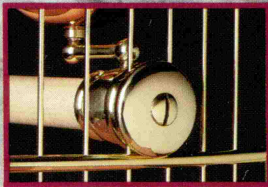
results were worth it. The vibrant colors of the exotics and the intricate detail of the birds of prey and ocean series make

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