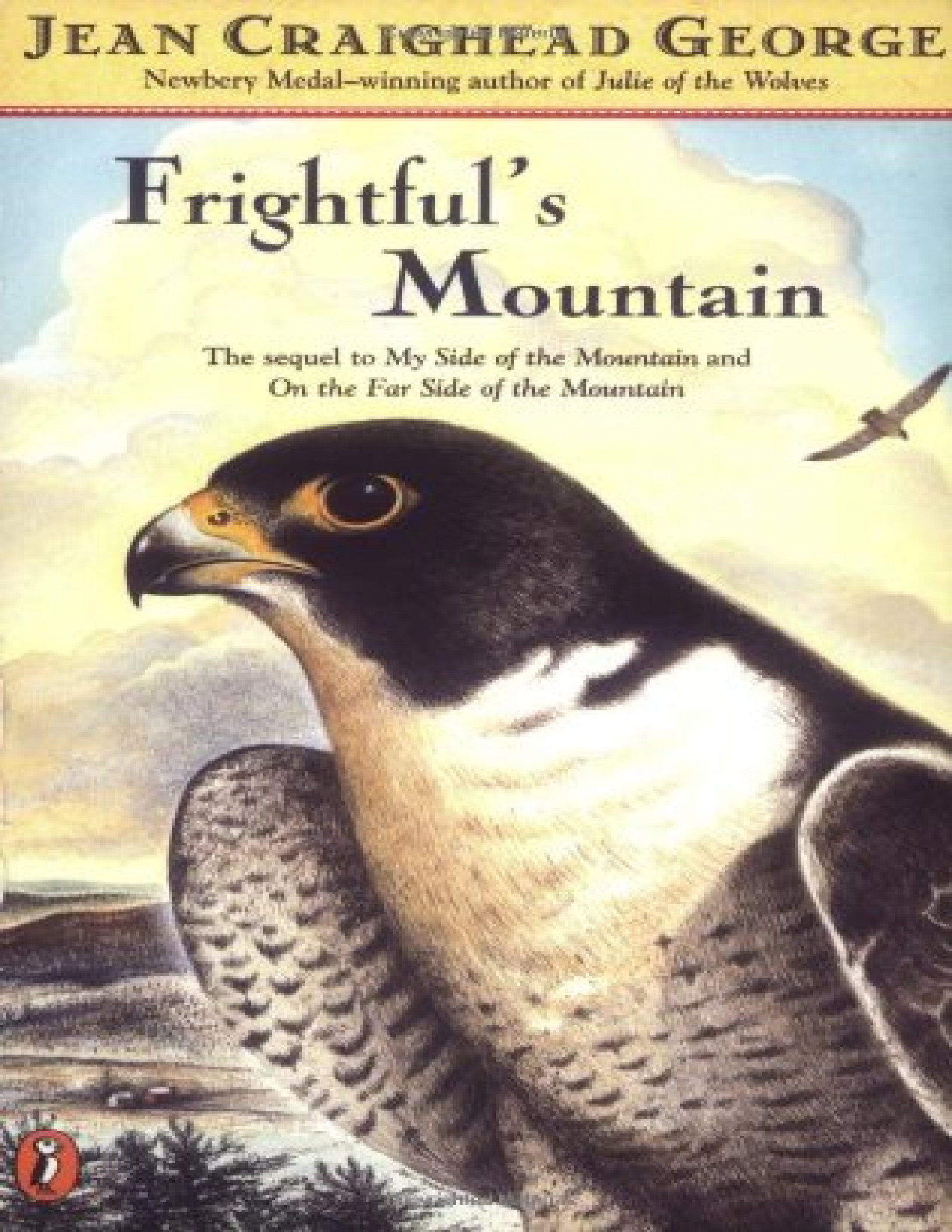
JEAN CRAIGHEAD GEORGE

Newbery Medal–winning author of *Julie of the Wolves*

Frightful's Mountain

The sequel to *My Side of the Mountain* and *On the Far Side of the Mountain*



Frightful’s Mountain

Written and illustrated by
Jean Craighead George

Background Color 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9


Helderberg Escarpment
TAKE-OFF POINT
Chap's aerie
Schoharie River
Altamont
Albany
Frightful's Mountain and Sam's tree house
Woodchuck Lodge
Gilboa
Roxbury
Schoharie Reservoir
Delhi
Bovina
Andes
Perry
The Woods' home
Margaretville
Catskill
Catskill Mountain Park
Kingston
NEW YORK
FRIGHTFUL'S PEREGRINATIONS
Hudson River
North America
Hook Mountain
Galápagos Islands
South America
New York City

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Summary: As she grows through the first years of her life in the Catskill Mountains of New York, a peregrine falcon called Frightful interacts with various humans, including the boy who raised her, a falconer who rescues her, and several unscrupulous poachers, as well as with many animals that are part of the area's ecological balance.

To Frank and John

Foreword

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In 1986, I met Jean Craighead George at a friend's home in the upstate New York town where we all live. I grew up admiring the Craigheads, a family of naturalists, whose adventures I followed in *National Geographic* magazine, where they always seemed to be attaching transmitters to grizzly bears, banding bald eagles, or paddling canoes and fiberglass kayaks on first descents down the best western white waters. Always, there were flocks of children participating in every adventure and experiment. I thought the Craigheads might be the only family in America that was having more fun than the Kennedys. Obsessed with falcons as I was from birth, I read *My Side of the Mountain* in 1964. When I met Jean Craighead George that day in New York, she reminded me about the letter that I had written her, at *age* eleven, politely inquiring if she knew where I could find an occupied kestrel nest. The following year, my father finally bought me a pet-store red-tailed hawk. I manned her to my fist although I still lacked the tutelage to train or hunt her.

But in the autumn of 1968, I entered Millbrook School in upstate New York, drawn by its informal falconry program. At Millbrook, just across the Hudson from Delhi—where Sam and Frightful had had their adventures—I found a small cadre of students who not only shared my devotion to the birds, they had mastered the sport of falconry. That autumn, we captured and trained red-tails and kestrels, immature birds on their first migration. We used bow nets, bal chartris or harness pigeons, and contraptions that bristled with monofilament snares and nooses which we found diagrammed in Beebe & Webster's *North American Falconry and Hunting Hawks* or described in the classic writings of Frederick the Great.

By the time the leaves fell in the third week of October, we had trained the birds to come when we called and to follow like dogs, but high in the canopy flying from tree to tree over our heads. We beat the bush below them for cottontail and pheasant, worked the corn stubble for giant Belgian hare and the forests for red and gray squirrels. We flew falcons and

goshawks but mostly wild red-tails, pioneering many of the game-hawking techniques still used by American falconers.

I don't think any of us realized how unusual our success in training red-tailed hawks to hunt was until we all made a pilgrimage to see Al Nye the following Thanksgiving in Falls Church, Virginia. Nye, one of the fathers of modern game hawking, flew peregrines and goshawks, the classic choices of traditional Asian and European falconry. Nye showed us his prized European goshawk, Suzie, and boasted that the bird had already taken a dozen cottontails that season. When we told him we'd taken around the same number with our red-tails, he reacted sceptically. Convention considered the North American red-tail to be at best an inferior hunting tool. European falconers dismissed them contemptuously as "buzzards." We told Nye, "We have the pelts to prove it."

We talked about hawks every spare moment—at meals, between classes, and after chapel. At night, we fashioned hardware, hoods, jesses, and gauntlets and bewits out of tough, pliant kangaroo hide. We marked in our memories the raptor nests we found during our daily winter hunting excursions when no leaves obstructed our view of the upper canopy. In the spring, we climbed up to those nests to band baby red-tails, crows, and owls. We learned to use ropes and climbing spurs to scale the tall oak and ash trees where the large raptors nested. I also learned taxidermy and basic veterinary skills, how to determine disease, check for worms, give injections, and diagnose a range of illnesses and parasites that afflict raptors and other animals. We even began a raptor breeding project, one of the first in history, and were partially successful, persuading a golden eagle and a red-tailed hawk to lay eggs in captivity.

Since my years at Millbrook, I have flown hawks nearly every autumn. These days, I am flying a pair of Harris hawks. I have flown my hen, Cuchin (a superb hunter), for fourteen years. I continue to trap, band, and release hawks every migration on Orange County's Schunnemunk Ridge—a vantage from which, on a clear morning, I can glimpse the Catskill peaks around Delhi. On a good day with a south wind, we trap upwards of fifty hawks: peregrines, Cooper's hawks, sharp-shins, red-tails, goshawks, merlins, and golden eagles. I maintain breeding aviaries for hawks and owls at my home in Mount Kisco, New York, a few miles from Jean George's

home. I breed quail, pheasant, and occasionally turkeys, and I operate a wildlife rehabilitation center, with state and federal licenses that allow me to rehabilitate orphaned and injured raptors. My experience as a young falconer accounts in large part for my lifelong devotion to raptors and my continued interest in natural history.

Our time as falconers left its mark on my schoolmates as well. All of them have chosen careers in the natural sciences or as environmental advocates with exceptional records. For each one of them, reading *My Side of the Mountain* was the formative inspiration of their falconry experience. My years as a falconer helped drive my own career choice as an environmental lawyer and advocate. The knowledge and experience I acquired from falconers have marked my life and made me a far more effective advocate on nature's behalf. I have to assume that thousands of other children outside my immediate circle were also inspired to varying degrees of ecological stewardship by their exposure to Sam Gribley's adventures in *My Side of the Mountain*. It's my hope that this wonderful sequel, *Frighful's Mountain*, will inspire thousands of new kids.

ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.
July 1999

Frightful, the peregrine falcon, could not see. A falconer's hood covered her head and eyes. She remained quiet and calm, like all daytime birds in the dark. She could hear, however. She listened to the wind whistling through pine needles. This wind music conjured up images of a strange woods and unknown flowers. The sound was foreign. It was not the soft song of wind humming through the hemlock needles of home.

Frightful was a long way from her familiar forest. Suddenly an all-invading passion filled her. She must go. She must find one mountain among thousands, one hemlock tree among millions, and the one boy who called himself Sam Gribley. The one mountain was her territory; the one tree was Sam's house; the perch beside it, her place. And Sam Gribley was life.

IN WHICH

Frightful Takes Off

Frightful had not been quite two weeks old when she first saw Sam Gribley. He had lifted her from her nest on a cliff. Small as she was, she had jabbed him with her already powerful talons as he carried her to the ground. “I’m going to call you Frightful,” he had said. “You are a raving beauty.” Then he carried her to the gigantic hemlock tree on the mountain and into its hollowed-out bole. This was Sam’s home.

He fed her four and five times a day. He carried her on his gloved fist and talked to her. Before long, Frightful thought of him as her mother. He nurtured her like a peregrine falcon mother would.

When she was older, Sam made a perch for her and placed it outside his tree. He taught her to fly to his hand. When she was full-grown, he took her hunting with him. By now, the memory of her parents was pushed far back in her mind. Sam was her family.

At night and on winter days, Sam brought Frightful inside the huge old tree. She perched on his rustic bedstead and warmed herself by the clay fireplace. On spring and summer days, she would sit on her perch outside and watch the birds, the butterflies, and busy Sam. Patiently she waited for him to take her hunting. It was her greatest pleasure. She loved the sky. She loved the updrafts and coiling winds, and she loved “waiting on,” hovering above Sam until he kicked up game. Then she stooped, the wind singing in her feathers.

Frightful was an excellent hunter who rarely missed. The food was shared. Their lives depended on each other. She must find Sam again now.

Frightful crouched to fly. She could not see. She folded her gray-blue wings to her body and straightened up.

Hooded and tethered, she had traveled with two strange men for several days.

One of them had taken her from the perch beside the big hemlock tree. He had a deep jerky voice and a face like a condor's. She looked intently at him before he slipped the falconer's hood over her head.

Sam had begged and pleaded with the man not to take her away, but he had pushed Sam aside and carried her down the mountain to a pickup truck. A leather perch had been presented to her feet. She had stepped up on it as Sam had taught her to do. A door had closed, and she was inside a camper on the truck. The motor rumbled, and she was moving. A falcon bell tinkled nearby. A sharp-shinned hawk had shifted his feet. A prairie falcon called out a single note. They, like herself, were sensing the direction of the moving pickup—east, northeast, east, then straight north.

Several feedings later, the second man put Frightful on a perch in the pine forest. The prairie falcon and the sharp-shinned hawk were there, too. She could hear their bells tinkling. Although they were birds who would readily attack her, she was not afraid of them.

Frightful was a peregrine falcon. She was faster and more agile than any other bird or beast the world around. Her long pointed wings; wide shoulders; and strong, tapered body were sculpted by the wind, the open sky, and the nature of her ancestral prey—swift birds.

Frightful sat calmly under her hood, turning the sounds in the pine forest into mental images. A song sparrow caroled. A cardinal chirped. They told her she was in a forest clearing edged with bushes where song sparrows and cardinals lived.

A northern waterthrush trilled. Frightful envisioned a dashing stream shaded by a majestic forest, the summer home of the northern waterthrush. She heard the stream in the distance. It had many voices as it spilled down a stairway of rocks.

Suddenly the cardinal screamed an alarm. A predator was approaching. The songbirds stopped chittering. The forest became silent. Even the insects