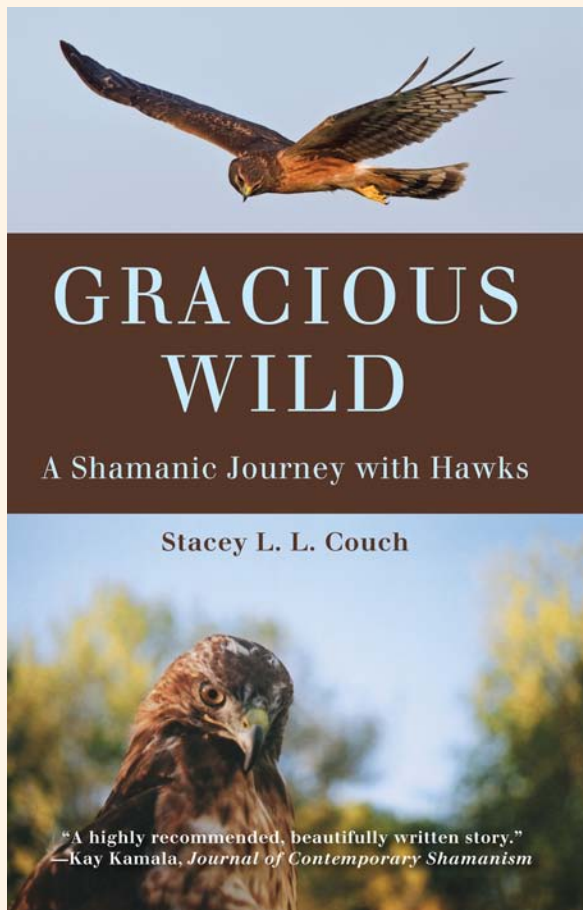


## Book Review

# *Gracious Wild: A Shamanic Journey with Hawks*



*Gracious Wild: A Shamanic Journey with Hawks* begins with the author, a wildlife biologist who had dreamed of saving the planet, alone on an island both physically and metaphorically facing the reality of working for a captive fox breeding programme. This, while potentially freeing the foxes from extinction, meant daily facing the heart wrenching misery of a wild animal who clearly despised being caged. It is there and then that she is drawn out of her loneliness by the call of a wild harrier hawk and begins her journey towards finding grace in her everyday life.

Facing her disillusionment with her chosen career, alongside the messages from Hawk, author Stacey Couch was introduced to a shamanic practitioner, undergoing healing and recalling her childhood affinity with medicine women and 'active dreams'. *Gracious Wild* follows her journey from the mundane world of scientific research to the holistic spiritual world of shamanism through her work at a wildlife rehabilitation centre and close relationship with two damaged beautiful rescue hawks, Thalia and Graccia. The synchronicities between the author's shamanic journey work and her training with the hawks allow her to be true to her own spirit as well as playing a vital part in her work with the birds she loves.

Talking of synchronicity, just prior to starting to read this book I visited the National Botanic Garden in Wales where there was a working bird display featuring a beautiful hawk and owl and wondered about the lives of captive birds used for educational purposes in this way. *Gracious Wild* answered my question in authentic detail, describing the complexities and issues of working with wild and captive birds of prey and this book provides a wonderful window into their world.

Working with damaged rescue animals and birds the author has also been involved in the decisions made regarding euthanasia and has helped many of her friends cross over both physically and with shamanic ceremony. These times are described both beautifully and sensitively.

Stacey Couch states that she believes both Thalia and Graccia came into her life for a reason to give her the gift of their story and hers. *Gracious Wild* is that story; honest, poignant and eloquently told with reverence and gratitude for the natural world. An intimate and authentic account of one woman's journey from science to shamanism as well as offering fascinating insight into the world of hawks, *Gracious Wild* is recommended reading, bringing inspiration of how everyone can discover grace from the divine spirits of the natural world.

Stacey L. L. Couch, *Gracious Wild*,  
Turning Stone Press, San Francisco  
(2013), ISBN: 978-1-61852-055-5