

PAN

AMSTERDAM

FLAT // LAND



Drifter, Broadwinged-Hawk_Wounded Warriors, 2015

Photograph on archival fibre based cotton rag paper, 91 x 72 cm

Divinely it sits calmly in its coat of white and grey downy feathers, overlooking with exceptional eyesight its surroundings; waiting for the moment to grab its hunt. The muscled legs and broad breast of this Broad-Winged Hawk, not to mention its sharp beak, leave us in no doubt. This is a bird of prey. In the blink of an eye, its mission will be complete.

Female hawks, like most birds of prey, are larger than males. In scientific language this phylogenetic phenomenon is called RSD, "Reversed" Sexual Dimorphism. The reason females are larger is because they have to defend "like a hawk" their eggs and offspring against ruthless predators, such as bigger birds. Their relatively greater body mass is thus an adaptation (what biologists refer to as "natural selection"). Though this Broad-Winged Hawk looks like an alpha, it is in fact a relatively smaller, male bird.

'Drifter no 1' was taken by Australian fine art photographer Leila Jeffreys, as part of her series 'Wounded Warriors'. Drifter was rescued by a conservation group after he was found wounded during his long-distance migratory journey from North to Central and South America. Since hawks are monogamous, the trauma is doubled: they often lose their partners and their homes. "These birds are the sovereigns of the skies but they are also at the mercy of misfortune." - Leila Jeffreys. Regarding the concept of alpha, she notes: "Boys tend to be more friendly than ladies; they are often easier to work with, as they seem more docile, whereas girls often come across a little sharper. That also means, they move around a lot."

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Leila Jeffreys, who is known for her photographs of birds that explore and subvert the traditions of portraiture, sees her avian subjects as living beings who, as Drifter, bring their personal traits and histories into the images. Each photograph is a result of a long process of fieldwork in collaboration with conservationists, ornithologists and sanctuaries, which often propel the creation of programs to protect endangered habitats. Her work draws attention to the interdependence between species, and its impact on each bird, as a concrete individual.