



FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Promoting the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife, through education, participation, stewardship, and advocacy.

November 9, 2009

Ms. Katie Knoll, Public Involvement Unit Manager
Colorado Division of Wildlife
6060 Broadway
Denver, CO 80216

Dear Ms. Knoll,

On behalf of the Fort Collins Audubon Society, we are writing to express our concern about possible changes to Colorado's existing regulations pertaining to falconry. In advance of the November 12 Wildlife Commission meeting in Alamosa, we wished to raise the following issues of particular concern to our members. We hope the Commission will consider these items carefully before making any changes to existing laws that protect Colorado birds of prey.

Having examined the list of proposed changes elaborated in the "Chapter 6 Issue Paper" posted on the Division website, our chapter has agreed upon a set of general recommendations, and recommendations specific to the continued health of the Peregrine Falcon.

General Recommendations:

1. We support the current regulation that nonresidents may not take raptors in Colorado.
2. We recommend that Gyrfalcons be removed from the list of raptors that may be taken from the wild.
3. We recommend that no owl species be added to the list of raptors allowed to be taken.
4. We support maintaining current regulations concerning the sale or trade of raptors, specifically that a captive raptor may be sold only one time.

We propose this set of "General Recommendations" with the continued well-being of Colorado raptors in mind, and with an overarching goal of enabling the broadest population possible to continue to observe and enjoy Colorado wildlife across the state.

Peregrine Falcon-Specific Recommendations:

Preventing the extinction of the Peregrine Falcon in Colorado has required more than thirty years of diligent, combined efforts of the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. Peregrine Falcon numbers are on the rise in Colorado, thanks to funds from taxpayers (both nationwide and in Colorado), donors to Great Outdoors Colorado, and donors to Colorado's "Wildlife Check-Off" program, not to mention countless hours of volunteer labor.

Despite a gradual rebound in recent years, Peregrines are still a "species of concern," and even Division publications indicate they "will probably always remain of special concern, given the relatively small population and high public interest."¹

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The Fort Collins Audubon Society therefore recommends maintaining peregrine-specific rules, rather than defaulting to “general raptor regulations,” including:

1. Keep the cost of the Peregrine Capture License higher than other licenses;
2. Do not allow for the take of passage peregrine falcons;
3. Maintain the 5-year waiting period to draw for peregrine take after successful take;
4. Maintain the requirement to notify the Division of the three aeries proposed for take, and maintain the 3 attempt limit;
5. Maintain the provision that allows the Division to deny take from aeries with unsuitable substrate or that have ongoing disturbance that threatens the survival of adults and young;
6. Maintain the Division oversight to deny take at the time proposed;
7. Maintain the requirement to use a blind when taking recently-fledged birds;
8. Maintain the requirement to notify the Division of take within 24 hours if the Division is not represented at the capture site;
9. Maintain the present 5-day period the license holder has to submit a 3-186A form;
10. Maintain the provision for Division oversight during peregrine take attempts;
11. Maintain perimeter restrictions for scoping of nests.

Peregrine Falcons are enjoyed by vast numbers of Colorado residents, and their recovery was financed by Colorado taxpayers and donors, very few of whom are falconers. Loosening restrictions that protect this species’ continued survival for the benefit of a relatively small number of falconers makes no biological, environmental, or financial sense.

We hope the Commission will consider carefully the points we have elaborated above. As the Commission considers changes to Colorado falconry regulations, we encourage it to keep the health and well-being of wildlife as its guiding principle. Any change to current regulations should be supported by good data on current raptor population status and productivity in Colorado. Changes also need to be realistic in the context of resources available to the Division to administer and enforce them.

For the Fort Collins Audubon Society, and for the well-being of raptors who cannot advocate on their own behalf, we submit these comments for consideration.

With very best regards,

Karl Krahnke
President, Fort Collins Audubon Society

¹ Gerald R. Craig and James H. Enderson, *Peregrine Falcon Biology and Management in Colorado, 1973-2001* (Colorado Division of Wildlife, 2004), 64.