

PUBLIC FALCONRY CALL, AUGUST 10, 2012, 2:00-4:00PM
MEETING NOTES

Participants

Falconers participating by phone:

Brad Felger
Morgan Campbell
Jim De Roque
Glenn Stewart
David Wadsworth
Kim Mauch
Paul Hutchinson
Bill Murphy
Keith Richman
Steve Woods
Wade Eakle

DFG staff participating in-person:

Dale Steele – Nongame Wildlife Program Manager
Eric Loft – Wildlife Branch Chief
Carie Battistone – Staff Environmental Scientist
Kevin Cahill – Scientific Aid

Purpose: Go over revised schedule and discuss proposed regulatory changes

Revised schedule is accessible on the [falconry webpage](#). An update was given to the Fish and Game Commission August 9 and will be available online in 2-3 days. We plan to put the Power Point from presentation on the website as well. A link to the August 2012 Falconry update given to the Commission is available here (Agenda item 22E) (<http://www.cal-span.org/cgi-bin/archive.php?owner=CFG&date=2012-08-09>).

A link to the November 2011 Falconry update given to the Commission is available here (Agenda item 6) (<http://www.cal-span.org/cgi-bin/archive.php?owner=CFG&date=2011-11-16>).

Discussion of schedule:

- 10/3/2012 Notice Meeting with Fish and Game Commission (FGC) Sacramento
- 11/7/2012 Discussion meeting L.A (FGC)
- 12/12/2012 Adoption meeting S.D.
- 1/1/2014 Effective date

Effective date pushed back because USFWS can only certify via publication in the Federal Register only Jan 1st of each year. Package must be submitted the previous September for certification. FGC process and public review periods go beyond this September deadline.

We cannot just certify the current state regulations because they do not currently meet federal standards.

The 45-day review starts with submission to FGC.

After regulations are adopted by FGC, they must go to OAL for final approval before they can become effective. There is about a 45-day OAL to review.

The schedule shows a projected adoption by FGC about 9 months in advance of Sept. 2013 deadline. This adoption is subject to FGC timeline process.

Discussion:

Brad – Hope to have package completed and approved by OAL by Dec. 2012

Wade – Will Falconers be operating under new package in 2013?

Carie – No, not until 2014 approval. If package had been approved Jan 1, 2013 the effective date would have been July 1, 2013. If package is approved Jan 1, 2014, effective date will be Jan 1, 2014. A license renewed for 2013 will be subject to the current regulations. After 2014 it will be subject to new regulations. DFG needs to coordinate transition internally, such as payments, enforcement, and licensing.

Potential Changes to Regulations:

Age Limits: Proposed for the California - 14 for apprentice and 18 for general class. USFWS is 12 for apprentice and 16 for general class.

Keith – Certain situations would be fine for younger apprentice and general class with supervision and guidance. Some aspects of falconry are hard to pick up unless learned at an early age.

Carie – May propose changing state to coincide with federal

Unknown commenter(s) - Requiring a sponsor facilitates supervision of young falconers. Sponsorship program can be a way to regulate age of apprentice. Age can be regulated on a case by case basis.

Apprentice Sponsorship Program: The License and Revenue Branch had received complaints by apprentice falconers that sponsors were not available due to distance or being too busy. On proposal is to add language limiting the number of apprentices per master falconer to 3, and requiring the sponsor live no more than 100 miles from apprentice.

Morgan - Concern w/ these limits. What if someone lives nowhere near a sponsor? Should they be denied participation in the sport?

Brad – It is a shame to isolate a person because of where they live.

General Discussion - Complaints may be coming from disgruntled apprentices who weren't ready and were denied by a sponsor. Is there a way to encourage more

Sponsorship? It is atypical to start 3 apprentices at a time. Usually the apprentices are at different stages requiring different levels of supervision. It is easier to add apprentices if others are already experienced.

Carie - Has to thin about discussion and speak with LRB and other staff in DFG.

Wild Take: Species added are red-shouldered hawk and barred owl. Species removed include Ferruginous hawk. Removal based on PIF population estimate data, minimal take in CA according to falconry records, and studies from Northern part of range indicating decline or special status.

Carie: Why the lack of interest in GHOW?

Answer: Timing of take period makes take difficult to get

Morgan: Have you considered smaller owls? They are good for areas with smaller and less open space.

Carie: The problem with small owls is there is no good data on populations because they haven't been monitored over time.

Brad: We can't open harvest if we don't know the impact

American kestrel: A decline is apparent but numbers are still high enough where falconry take will not impact population.

Glenn - We don't know the potential of birds we haven't been able to handle before, such as Northern harrier. Harrier could be a good falconry bird based on their hunting style.

Carie: Harrier thought to be declining

Goshawk in Tahoe Basin: There has been no consistent monitoring by USFS.

Monitoring that has been done is only associated with specific projects. We can only guess at the population numbers for this area. DFG is proposing a drawing for 1 bird to be taken from the Basin per year. This would be similar to big game drawings.

Eric: Is this worth the money? Will people be interested in taking one bird?

Unknown commenter(s) – Some felt it would be worth it if it opens the Basin to more opportunity for harvest down the road. Some felt May not be worth all the red tape and cost associated with taking 1 bird. More regulations tend to make things more difficult.

Carie - Population in the Basin being hit by recreational effects as well (trails, road, OHV). Harvest would still be allowed outside Basin.

Eric: In order to open this area, we must have scientific evidence that the population is doing OK.

Glenn - Harvest shouldn't be limited because the forest service isn't interested in looking for goshawk.

Prairie Falcon Quota: DFG is proposing a drawing for take of 14 per year statewide. On average 9 taken per year from 2005-2010 based on falconry data.

Unknown commenter(s) – Has the state looked into the history behind the use of prairie falcons in California and why they were removed in the 1980's?

If average is below proposed cap, why bother with the cap in the first place?

No need to incur cost of regulation and drawing if demand is lower than cap.

If we aren't taking the quota now, why make us pay to try?

What is the cap (14) based upon?

What is the fee for the drawing application and the permit?

Carie – Cap is based on PIF estimates and methodologies from methodology used in federal Environmental Assessments

The fee for the drawing application would be around \$7.50 and the permit would be \$12.50.

Merlin: DFG is proposing restricting take to outside of the breeding season, e.g., no eyas take.

Carie - Is there interest?

Keith – There is “Possibly no better falconry bird”. There is an increased desire to fly smaller birds due to constricted hunting space. Land owners are more likely to let you fly a bird that hunts pest species such as starlings (i.e. merlin) vs. a bird that hunts game species (i.e. peregrine).

Quota Birds Summarized:

Goshawk –Lottery for 1 in the Basin

Prairie falcon – Quota of 14 statewide lottery

Merlin – Limit harvest to nonbreeding season

Facility Inspection: Rather than having sponsors inspect facilities and equipment, DFG is proposing to conduct inspections with wardens. There would be a \$215 fee for new facility inspections. These are not annual inspections, but rather inspections on an as needed basis.

Group discussion – There was a general disapproval of this proposal from falconers. Kids can't afford this after spending all the money on setting up facility in first place.

Why is the cost being shifted to the hunter? This does not happen in other sports.

What is the problem with having sponsors inspect facilities?

Do Wardens know what they are supposed to look for?

Will digital pictures and diagrams of facility suffice?

Eric - We are obligated to ensure the safety of the animal. This is dealing with caging animals so it is different than other types of hunting. We are not making revenue from this fee. It is calculated to neutralize cost of the inspection.

Carie – We have been working closely with law enforcement and they are dedicated to learning what they need to look for so the best job can be done.

Hacking: DFG is proposing to use the same language as the federal regulations regarding hacking. (Unanimous approval)

Reporting requirements: The idea is to get falconry licensing and reporting running on our Automated licensing program (i.e. ALDS). The ALDS development for falconry is running a bit behind the regulation process. We have built language for transition from paper forms to ALDS into the regulations. California requires more info than the feds, so double reporting (reporting to both the feds online system and to the state) may occur for a short time. If falconers have no access to internet to enter 3-186A form into federal online reporting tool, falconer can call or mail in report to LRB and LRB will enter it for them for a \$10 fee.

Unknown commenter(s) - Will DFG accept GPS coordinates instead of range and township?

Can we do away w/ California reporting form?

Carie – We are moving to Lat/Long submission rather than township/range/section. We require more info than the feds so we cannot do away with state reporting.

Fees: License fees are part of the Fish and Game Code and will not change unless they go through the Legislative process, which is different than the Commission process. Most other fees have already been talked about.

Unknown commenter(s) – Will DFG consider a multiple year license? Will this work with LRB?

Carie – Currently we are proposing a single year license so we can better assess the increased oversight and workload for DFG. This kind of change can be addressed down the road if needed. This may be easier to do once ALDS is developed for falconry.

Review of species allowed for wild take:

- a. Northern goshawk, Cooper's hawk, Sharp-shinned hawk, Red-tailed hawk, Red-shouldered hawk, Merlin, Prairie falcon, Barred owl, Great horned owl
- b. Ferruginous hawk was removed
- c. Open season on wild capture
- d. No more than 2 wild raptors per year per falconer

Review of Class Requirements/Limitations:

Apprentice: 1 bird, limited to wild or captive AMKE or RTHA, no eyas take,

General: 3 birds, of which 2 can be wild

Master: Any # of captive-bred raptors, only 5 wild

Carie - Are kestrels appropriate for the apprentice falconer?

Unknown commenter(s) – Kestrels teaches how to maintain weight. They condition the apprentice to fly smaller birds in the future. It may be worth limiting kestrel to 2nd year apprentice falconers.