

**Findings of the Alaska Board of Game
Nonresident Capture, Possession, and Export of Certain Raptors
2014-206-BOG**

At its Statewide Regulations meeting in March 2014, the Alaska Board of Game adopted regulations to allow nonresident falconers to capture raptors and export them to the falconer's state of residence.

The board had deliberated the issue in 2012 but did not take action due to unknowns associated with fee structures, administrative complexities, and controversial public testimony regarding several aspects of the proposal. The board requested the proposal (Proposal 174) be deferred until 2014 to provide for further review and consideration for allowing nonresident opportunity.

The board received written and oral testimony from numerous falconers at the March 2014 meeting and questioned testifiers regarding concerns and/or support for nonresident capture. Concerns included take of eyas birds from nests in easily accessible areas, which some felt would result in disturbance of some nests, competition and conflicts with resident falconers, and local depletion of resources in particular areas. Numerous ideas were suggested to alleviate these concerns including closing of road corridors and certain well-known nest sites, and a possible requirement that nonresidents be accompanied by resident falconers. Some testifiers noted that eyas birds of some species are highly prized (e.g., gyrfalcon), which could potentially lead to an unpredictable level of demand, pressure on the resource and other users, and abuse through known illegal trafficking activities. The board heard concerns from the Department of Fish and Game (department) that the nonresident program would be relatively costly to administer under the existing state falconry regulations that operate under a federal falconry framework. There is no fee structure in place to recoup some of these costs. In 2012 the board requested that the department develop a small scale nonresident harvest program in the simplest form possible so that administrative issues can be solved and appropriate fee structures can be established if expansion is warranted or desired. It was noted that while administrative fees can be established once costs can be accurately estimated, license and tag fees are under legislative purview and may or may not be established in the future, which could impact further development of a nonresident capture program. The department stated that a modest take of raptors by nonresident falconers posed no population concerns for any of the species that would be harvested.

The board agreed nonresident opportunity should be allowed, and concluded there are currently no biological concerns with allowing nonresident capture.

The board adopted regulations allowing for a limited nonresident take of passage (flighted/migrant) birds, thus providing nonresident opportunity while not inundating the department with a disproportionate administrative program management burden. The board has credible information on the historical levels of resident use, but is not comfortable allowing unlimited nonresident take until the impacts of small scale nonresident capture for a few years can be evaluated. The board expressly contemplated that changes, including the possible expansion of nonresident opportunity, will be considered when the topic is again open for proposals and board consideration at future statewide regulation board meetings, the next of

which will be in 2016. At that time the board will have the benefit of feedback on the new nonresident harvest opportunity from the department and users.

These findings reflect the intent of the board's decision during the Statewide Regulations meeting held in March 2014.

Date: _____

Ted Spraker, Chairman
Alaska Board of Game