

This is in response to statements made by opponents of proposals 92 and 93.

Opponents of these proposals have suggested that commercial breeders came to the state to trap raptors last year under the nonresident permits that were offered.

I am one of the nonresident falconers who was fortunate enough to draw a nonresident falconry permit allowing me to trap a raptor in Alaska.

Of the three falconers who drew permits, zero have any background in breeding or exporting raptors. Zero even possess a propagation permit. Two birds were exported, and both birds were flown in falconry and are currently alive and well, molting in preparation for next season.

Opponents attempt to use baseless scare tactics relating to commercial value of Gyrfalcons to protest an increased take, and a nestling take. Gyrfalcons of any color phase are indeed desirable birds for falconry. However, gyrfalcons can be trapped in the lower 48. There is much greater interest overall in passage peregrines. Additionally, anyone coming to Alaska to trap a raptor can expect to spend anywhere from \$5,000 to \$20,000 on their trip.

I personally spent more than twice what a captive bred white gyrfalcon would have cost me in the lower 48 when I came up to trap, and anyone looking for an nestling can expect to spend even more because of additional transportation expenses such as chartering a boat or a bush pilot. I gutted my personal savings in order to take part in a once in a lifetime trip and to have the experience that had previously been unavailable to me. A trip to Alaska to trap a raptor is not an opportunity to make money. It is an opportunity to bring much needed revenue to remote portions of the state while pursuing a personal dream.

Any suggestion that allowing increased take, or allowing a nestling take would encourage illicit activity is baseless and illogical. It is the same as suggesting (with no supporting evidence) that it is believed that someone came up and poached a bear, so bear hunting should not be allowed for nonresidents. If there has indeed ever been illegal trapping in Alaska (which opponents offers no evidence of), then opening up a legal channel will curb that activity, not exacerbate it. Additionally, the oversight currently in place will ensure that if anyone fails to follow the regulations in place, they will be caught. If someone wanted to come to the state to illegally acquire a raptor it is ridiculous to think they would do so when they have drawn attention to themselves by obtaining a nonresident permit, notifying the state of their location and plans for trapping etc. Suggesting that someone would come to the state "under the guise" of legal trapping because they have successfully obtained a permit is laughable.

Any suggestion that white gyrfalcon numbers would suffer is also baseless and illogical.

Opponents suggest an 80% mortality rate for raptors in their first year. What that truly means is that each raptor trapped for falconry had an 80% chance of not making it through their first year regardless, and a significantly higher mortality rate preventing them from reaching breeding age. There simply aren't enough falconers who can afford to make such an expedition to impact wild populations. Additionally, white gyrfalcons are most easily found through aerial surveys, which are extremely expensive and time

consuming, and eyries which are found (if any) are completely unaccessible as often as not.

Well under 30 nonresident falconers applied for permits this year. Most wanted peregrines. Few who wanted gyrfalcons would be able to afford to mount the extremely expensive expedition into remote northern Alaska in order to ATTEMPT to acquire a white one, when a grey or silver could be captured at a fraction of the cost. (Four to five thousand dollars vs fifteen to twenty thousand dollars).

An additional fact for those worried about commercial interest in nestlings to consider is that anyone wanting to breed a nestling gyrfalcon knows that while a wild gyrfalcon or a passage gyrfalcon might breed at three years old, a female imprint is not going to lay eggs until it is five to seven years old.

There are already strict regulations in place regarding nonresident take. Authorities must be notified in advance of the location a falconer intends to trap in and the dates that they will be trapping. Stringent check out requirements involve bringing the banded falcon to a regional office so that it can be photographed in order to receive the paperwork necessary to transport the bird out of the state. It is also required that the exact location of capture is provided. This information is collected by the department of fish and game, and If it is felt that nonresident interest becomes a burden on a certain type of falcon or on certain nest locations, the department can adjust the allowances accordingly whether by restricting individual sites, species, or color morphs.

Biologists working for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game have determined that Alaska's population of native raptors can safely withstand a harvest that greatly exceeds what is currently allowed. I suggest that they are allowed to determine take allowance rather than those offering baseless, illogical reasons to restrict the availability of these birds.

I strongly support both proposal 92 and 93 and I refute the claims made by these individuals.

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