

PROPOSAL 114

5 AAC 92.037. Permits for falconry.

Change the nonresident season for acquiring a passage raptor as follows:

This proposal seeks to modify the nonresident season for acquiring a passage raptor as follows:

5 AAC 92.037(g)(8). Permits for falconry

The annual nonresident season for acquiring a passage raptor is from **September 15 – November 15** [AUGUST 15 – OCTOBER 31];

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Department proposes to change the season dates to ensure take of Gyrfalcons by nonresident falconers occurs away from the birds’ natal areas as was originally intended with the creation of the nonresident passage falconry season.

Gyrfalcons depart their natal areas in Alaska between approximately August 15 and September 12 (McIntyre et al. 2009, Eisaguirre et al. 2014). The current nonresident season beginning on August 15 allows recently fledged Gyrfalcons that have not yet left their natal areas to be taken by nonresidents near nests. This is a conservation concern because it incentivizes the sharing of sensitive nest site locations which are used repeatedly over centuries. It also encourages disturbance of cliff-nesting species by nonresident falconers scouting prior to the season opening when chicks are more vulnerable to disturbance. This concern is exacerbated for Gyrfalcons because there is substantial interest in obtaining financially valuable white Gyrfalcon nestlings for both legal and illegal purposes. White Gyrfalcons constitute less than 10% of Alaska’s Gyrfalcon population. It is therefore particularly important that season dates protect this small population of birds (n < 150) while near their nests to ensure sustained yield into the future for both resident and nonresident falconers.

The nonresident season dates were established in 2015 to provide opportunity to take all legal falconry species after they leave their natal area (i.e. passage bird). To date, 10 Gyrfalcons and 1 Northern Goshawk have been taken by nonresident falconers. Little interest has been shown by nonresident falconers in taking other passage falconry species as most are available in other states. Further, the peak of migration for most falconry species occurs in mid-September in Interior Alaska (McIntyre and Ambrose 1998), with peaks in Southcentral and Southeast likely similar or slightly later. The proposed date change would align the opening of the season with the peak availability of passage raptors, ensuring all falconry species remain available for harvest during the proposed season.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F20-055)
