

WHY NOT A FEDERAL HAWK LAW?

The battle to protect our useful hawks goes back many years, and yet conservationists have only succeeded in reducing the practice of hawk shooting. They have by no means stopped it. It is true that many states have laws protecting some of the birds of prey, but most of the time the laws go unenforced.

Connecticut is outstanding in having a model hawk law that protects *all* the birds of prey, except if one is caught in the act of destroying personal property.

There are some other states that protect all hawks but the Sharp-shinned, Coopers, and Goshawk, but because these three are exempt from protection, all hawks in the state are in jeopardy.

To the average layman all hawks are either "Chicken Hawks", "Hen Hawks", or perhaps "Pigeon Hawks". Having thus identified a hawk, he feels justified in killing it.

If our hawks did not fly low over the same narrow migration routes year after year, their misidentification by gunners would not be of any great importance. Facts show, however, that a vast percentage of the North American hawk population from widely scattered areas concentrate into relatively narrow flight lines during the spring and fall migration. Gunning along the flight lines still takes a very heavy toll of useful raptors. Hawks protected in one state are shot for bounty in another, or just to satisfy the ego of some gunner practicing for the coming hunting season.

In many states ardent conservationists are trying to get protection for all hawks as a means of preventing the useful types from being killed by mistake, but these people make little headway against the organized gunning element and unsympathetic State Game Commissions.

Would it not be better if we would all join forces and unite in one big effort to have *all* hawks added to the Federal Migratory Bird Act, with the provision that they would come under Federal protection only during their migration period, namely from September 1st to November 30th, and March 1st to April 30th.

Such a bill would require the efforts of all conservation groups all over the United States, but it would stand a better chance of becoming a law than if we tried to enact such legislation on a state to state basis. Education over a period of years will reduce the occasional violation, but only a well enforced Federal regulation will halt the mass slaughter that still goes on.

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