

**Testimony Submitted to the Environment Committee  
February 9, 2011**

**S.B. No. ~~287~~ 827**

**An Act Concerning Funding For The Department Of Environmental Protection**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Environment Committee.

My name is Jon D'Arpino. I am a licensed Connecticut falconer, secretary and spokesperson of the Connecticut Falconers Association, a member of the North American Falconers Association, and I serve on the Conservation Advisory Council to the Department of Environmental Protection.

I am testifying today on Senate Bill 827, An Act Concerning Falconry. On behalf of the Connecticut Falconers Association, I would like to express my support for S.B. 827.

Falconry is an environmentally sound field sport with a rich history and is practiced in 49 U.S. states and dozens of countries around the world. The roots of this time-honored activity date to 2,000 B.C. Over the years, falconers have made significant contributions to raptor science and the general welfare of birds of prey, with particular note to the role they played in helping restore the *Anatum* subspecies of the Peregrine Falcon in the 1970s.

The goal of every falconer is to keep his or her bird in optimal health by flying the bird as often as possible. In the wild, the mortality rate for first-year or "passage" hawks is high, with as many as 70 to 80 percent not surviving their first winter.

Conversely, in the hands of a falconer, these birds are able to hone their hunting skills in a safer environment. Falconry birds receive excellent care through a carefully monitored diet, protection from the elements and natural predators. By flying the birds regularly, we are able to ensure they are in top condition and help improve their odds for long-term survival when they are released back to the wild.

After a season or two hunting with a falconer, the birds we use, have become more accomplished hunters and are ready to be released where they will become part of the breeding population. It is a scientific fact that most of the birds used for falconry would not have survived their first year in the wild due to competition for resources and a host of natural and man-made hazards (being hit by cars, window strikes, etc.).

In 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a Final Environmental Assessment (FEA) and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) regarding the take of raptors from the wild for use in falconry and in raptor propagation.

At the present time, we have 10 licensed falconers in the Connecticut. The number of birds taken from the wild in any given year would be less than eight since not every falconer uses a red-tailed hawk for falconry. Thus, any impact on wild populations would be negligible.

Therefore, I urge you and the other members of the Environment Committee to support Senate Bill 287.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

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