

My name is Michael Krock. I have been an Ohio resident for my entire life and I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 28. I obtained my apprentice class falconry license in 2012 and currently hold a master class license. I actively hunt with my male Harris's Hawk and have had two Red-tailed Hawks previously.

Falconry is an ancient and traditional hunting method that involves the capture, training and partnership with a bird of prey. It is also one of the most highly regulated hunting sports in the United States. To become a falconer in the state of Ohio you must be at least 16 years of age, obtain a sponsor, pass an exam on raptor care, purchase or make the equipment necessary to maintain the raptor and build your housing facility. Once these items are complete the Ohio Division of Wildlife comes to your home and inspects your equipment and housing facilities. If the inspection is satisfactory, the apprentice falconer then acquires a permit to trap a Red-tailed Hawk or American Kestrel. The falconers of Ohio respect and support this difficult process as not everyone has the time, resources and dedication for this lifestyle.

As a falconer gains more years of experience they will obtain a general class license and then a master class license. These classifications allow the falconer to acquire and train a variety of raptors including hawks, falcons and even eagles. Currently, Ohio falconers do not have the opportunity to utilize owls in the sport.

Adding the family Strigidae, owls, to the Revised Code would provide benefit to the Ohio falconry community. Senate Bill 28 will bring Ohio Falconry regulations more in line with the 45 other states which currently allow the family Strigidae to be utilized. I have submitted a letter of support from the President of the North American Falconers Association for your review.

Ohio falconers are a small community and are continuously looking to add members to what is considered a cultural tradition. I have given falconry talks to scouting, school and outdoors groups to educate the public on the sport. On numerous occasions, children and adults ask if any falconers use owls. It is my opinion that pop culture and the Harry Potter series provokes these questions. When I tell the individual that we are not permitted to use owls it may discourage them from learning more about and pursuing falconry. Instead, we want to encourage young people to become involved in this outdoor activity, a benefit to technology driven generations.

The ability for falconers to utilize owls could also assist in the rehabilitation process. As injured owls are completing rehabilitation they could then be transferred to a falconer. The falconer could then train the owl and place the owl into real hunting situations. This would help the owl develop survival skills and eventually be released back into the wild.

The ability to hunt with owls would provide Ohio falconers with new opportunities such as learning about their habitats, behaviors, training and hunting styles. These experiences are not currently permitted. Falconers could then share these experiences with the public and help raise additional interest and awareness of these raptors. This knowledge can help further conservation since people sometimes see birds of prey as a threat or nuisance and shoot or poison them.

As the famous quote says,

In the end, we will conserve only what we love.
We will only love what we understand.
We will understand only what we are taught.
(Baba Dioum)

In summary, Senate Bill 28 is about opportunities. It will provide the opportunity to attract new falconers and the opportunity for experienced falconers to develop new skill sets. This will nurture the continuation of this unique ancient sport and sharing of its knowledge with the public.

Thank you for your time this morning. On behalf of the licensed falconers in Ohio, we truly appreciate your consideration of Senate Bill 28.



April 9, 2021

Re: Senate Bill 28 To amend section 1533.05 of the Revised Code to authorize the use of owls in the sport of falconry.

Dear Chairman Koehler, Vice Chairman Creech, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the House Agriculture and Conservation Committee

Thank you for this opportunity to comment in support of Ohio Senate Bill 28.

The North American Falconers Association (NAFA) is the largest membership-based falconry organization in the world, and has represented falconers and falconry in Mexico, the United States and Canada since 1961. On behalf of our many members in Ohio and across North America, NAFA asks for approval and implementation of this important improvement to falconry in Ohio.

In 2010 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added falconry, an ancient and traditional hunting method to its List of the Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity. One of the traditions and heritages of falconry is to be able to capture, train and hunt in partnership with a wild bird of prey.

Wild raptors are very important to the cultural heritage of falconry, and we recognize that the live capture of raptors dramatically improves falconry. Currently, falconers may only take or capture up to 2 birds per year. Total numbers taken are far below the theoretical maximum, however. After a thorough examination, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has formally issued a *Finding of No Significant Impact ("FONSI")* regarding the take of raptors for falconry.

Unfortunately, Ohio does not allow for the use of owls in falconry. No less than 45 other states in the US allow for the use of owls, "of the family Strigidae", a rule change currently being proposed in Senate Bill 28. NAFA strongly supports the proposed inclusion of owls for falconry.

In closing we would like to thank you for this opportunity to comment, and for developing a proposal that would significantly improve Ohio falconry and allow all falconers to fully participate in the cultural heritage and traditions of falconry — in a very sustainable way.

If there is any other information that we can provide in support of this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sheldon Nicolle'.

Sheldon Nicolle, President
nafapresident@n-a-f-a.com
North American Falconers Association
www.n-a-f-a.com

Millsap, B. A. and G. T. Allen. 2006. **Effects of Falconry Harvest on Wild Raptor Populations in the United States: Theoretical Considerations and Management Recommendations.** *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 34(5):1392-1400.

State of California, Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, 2013, **Final Environment Document Regarding Falconry Regulations**