

FALCONRY PERMIT PROCEDURE IN VIRGINIA

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Abstract: Virginia adopted regulations governing falconry October 1, 1976. The procedure for obtaining a joint Federal/State falconry permit for Virginia is outlined. To date 23 falconers hold permits in the State.

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Virginia has been an approved falconry state for 1 year. In response to urging by private individuals as well as the Federal Government, the Virginia Game Commission in 1975 initiated a program to do something for the falconers. The Fish & Wildlife Service had recently revised their Federal Falconry Standards, and these guidelines were followed closely by Virginia when they set up falconry regulations that became effective 1 October, 1976. It was agreed upon by both agencies to ease slowly into the new program, and that a joint Federal/State permit would be issued, starting 1 July, 1977. The new regulations were much more restrictive, requiring all falconers to pass an examination, to have their equipment and facilities approved, and to pay an initial fee of \$50.000 per year before a permit was issued. (Previous to this, the permit consisted of a simple form and cost \$5.00 per year. Renewal fee is now \$20.00 per year.)

METHODS

In June 1976, the job of administering the falconry permit regulations was divided between the Game Division and the Law Enforcement Division of the State. Here in Virginia, the Game Division designated a State Falconry Coordinator, and Law Enforcement designated 6 Chief Falconry Officers, 1 from each of 6 districts.

The Coordinators job was to (1) train the Falconry Officers in raptor identification and recognition of the special equipment used in falconry; (2) supervise Falconry Officers in equipment and facilities inspections and administering the written examinations; and (3) approve the applications, keep a card file on each falconer, and forward necessary papers to Richmond and Baltimore for the joint permit. In effect, he is liaison officer for the individual falconer, the Game Commission and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Chief Falconry Officers are responsible for making contact with each falconer to make arrangements to check his equipment and housing facilities, and at the same time give the written examinations. This is no small job, particularly for 1 of our falconry officers, since 10 of our 23 falconers live in his district near Washington, D. C.

To many falconers the procedure now used to issue a Federal/State Falconry Permit seems to be too lengthy, mainly because of the numerous steps involved for each application; but so far it has worked fairly well. Along this line, I understand the Fish and Wildlife Service is considering ways to simplify the paper work. The following is a description of the steps to be taken to get a Virginia Falconry Permit:

PROCEDURE

Inquiries concerning falconry are answered with a copy of our regulations on falconry, some information on facilities and equipment, a fact sheet on the examination and an application form. Instructions say not to send money until told to do so. Many would-be falconers are never heard from after they note the \$50.00 fee and the written examination of 100 multiple-choice questions that must be passed with a grade of at least 80.

When a completed application for a falconry permit is received, it is acknowledged, and the applicant is told to contact the Falconry Officer in his area when he is ready to take the examination and to have his equipment checked. A copy of the letter is sent to the Falconry Officer for his information. Each Falconry Officer has an examination booklet, an answer sheet and an equipment and facilities inspection form. The Officer makes no contact until he hears from the applicant.

After the Falconry Officer makes the inspection and gives the examination, these forms are sent to the Coordinator, who grades the exam. If a satisfactory grade is made and the equipment approved, the applicant is notified to send the permit fee. If he fails the exam, the applicant is told to take the examination again after studying some

more. This is tough for the applicant because he does not know which questions he missed.

The application form has a notation at the bottom stating that all of the above has been approved. After this is signed by the Coordinator, the \$50.00 fee is attached and sent to the Chief of our Administrative Services Division, where the check is retained. The application itself is sent on to the Law Enforcement Section of Fish & Wildlife Service. The Federal Permit is then issued and mailed to our Richmond office to be cosigned by the Executive Director. If the applicant has some hawks in his possession, appropriate markers are sent along with the permit. The Richmond office issues the original permit and markers to the falconer and a copy is sent to the Coordinator. This completes the transaction, at least for a time.

If any change occurs, such as the falconer moving to a new address, having 1 of his raptors die or lost to the wild, this requires some more correspondence to amend the permit. If a falconer adds a new bird, he notifies the Coordinator, who has a small supply of Federal markers, and one is sent immediately for him to use. This requires a pink card to be filled out by the falconer, who sends it to the Fish and Wildlife Service where his permit is amended to show the new bird.