



February 14, 2015

Dear Chair Witt and Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Audubon Society of Portland and our 15,000 members in the Portland Metropolitan Region in support of House Bill 2537 which would significantly strengthen the penalties associated with illegal take of wildlife under state wildlife laws. The current penalties associated with illegal take of protected wildlife in Oregon are completely insufficient to serve as a meaningful deterrent to illegal take and in no way reflect the value of the animals being illegally taken. HB 2537 remedies this situation by increasing fines associated with illegal take to meaningful but reasonable levels. It also restores mandatory penalties for certain wildlife crimes that were adopted in 2011 with bipartisan support in the legislature and support from the hunting, fishing and conservation communities, but which unfortunately sunsetted on January 1, 2015. We strongly urge your support for this important legislation.

We would urge the committee to consider one amendment to this legislation: In Section 3, which describes minimum fines for certain wildlife poaching crimes, a requirement, adopted by the legislature in 2011, that courts impose not less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the maximum fine for taking of a raptor with a culpable state of mind was left out of the legislation. It appears that this language which was adopted by the legislature in 2011 was inadvertently omitted.

Of particular interest to Audubon are the penalties associated with illegal take of birds of prey. Birds of prey are among our most charismatic wildlife species. Raptors can be found in all habitats, including urban landscapes, across Oregon. For many, the sight of a red-tail or a peregrine flying overhead is an entry point into the world of wildlife appreciation and conservation. Birding is one of the fastest growing pastimes in Oregon. Wildlife watching, hunting, trapping and fishing activities contribute more than a billion dollars to local economies each year and wildlife related equipment purchases in Oregon generate another \$1.5 billion in economic activity.¹ Our state has spent tremendous sums of money recovering species such as the peregrine falcon and bald eagle. Each year hundreds of volunteers participate in raptor surveys to ensure the Oregon raptor populations remain healthy.

However, our raptors are threatened by wanton and illegal killing. Each year at Audubon's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center 1%-2% of the 3,000 animals that we treat are victims of illegal killing. These cases are often the most disturbing situations that we deal with during the year. Of course we only see the tip of the iceberg in a wildlife rehabilitation situation; most birds of prey that are illegally shot are never found. All native birds of prey are protected and it is difficult and near impossible to mistake them for any species which are legally hunted.

Treating a bird of prey which does survive the initial gunshot can cost anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars. We are fortunate at our center that we have a large cadre of nearly 100 volunteers, including many volunteer veterinarians, that allow us to do this work despite the high costs. Audubon has been concerned enough about this problem that in 1996 we created the Migratory Bird Protection Fund which provides rewards of up to \$1,500 for people who report illegal taking of protected birds of prey leading to conviction. We regret that we have only been able to pay these rewards out on a few occasions as most cases are

¹ ODFW Report on Hunting, Fishing, Wildlife Viewing and Shellfishing in Oregon (2008)

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never resolved. We do believe however that it is important to send a strong message that if you illegally take wildlife, somebody will come looking for you. We need state laws that send an equally strong message and that lead to serious penalties when perpetrators are actually caught.

Audubon believes that illegal take of protected wildlife is a significant problem in Oregon. We believe that this bill will send a strong message to potential poachers that this kind of behavior will result in significant penalties. It will also send a strong message to the community that the investments that it has made in wildlife conservation will be protected. We believe that the proposed penalty increases are reasonable, proportionate and will help reduce these types of illegal activities.

HB 2537 is the right thing to do to protect our natural heritage, our community investments and our local economies. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Respectfully,

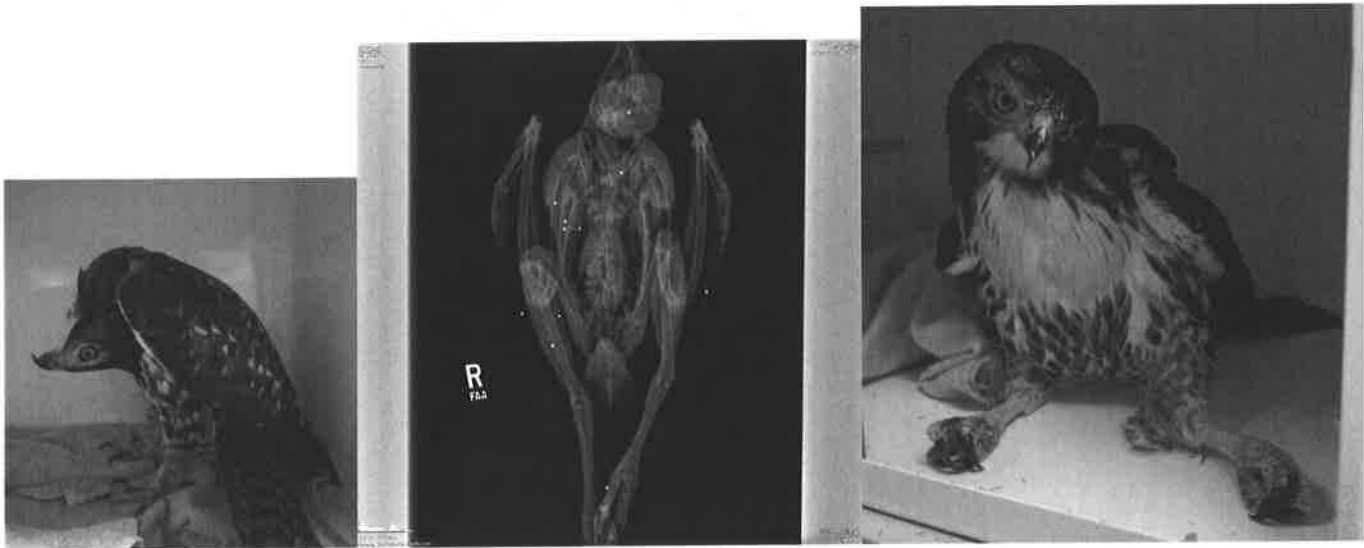
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Sallinger". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bob Sallinger
Conservation Director
Audubon Society of Portland

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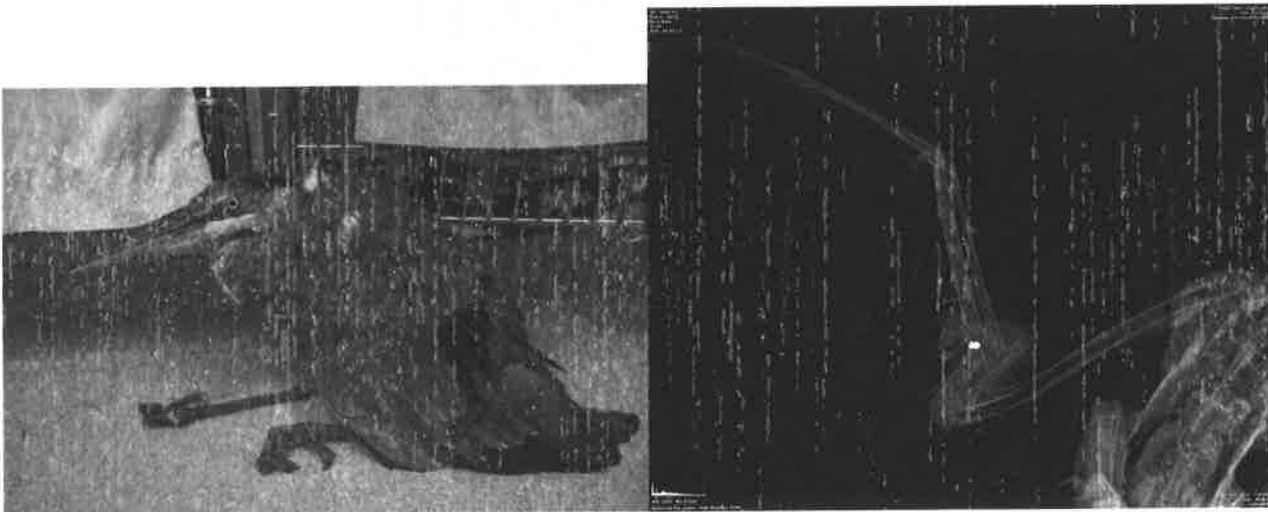
RTHA 1391-14

In July 2014 this Red-Tailed Hawk was brought to the Audubon Society of Portland's Wildlife Care Center because someone thought it had been poisoned. The hawk was found at a farm in Gaston weak and unable to fly. When we got the bird it was dehydrated and severely neurologic. The bird couldn't stand properly and wasn't even able to hold its head up. X-Rays determined that this bird was suffering these injuries due to it being illegally shot. You can see here the multiple pellets throughout the body including one in the head. The Red-Tail hawk was euthanized a few days later because its condition deteriorated.



GBHE 2650-14

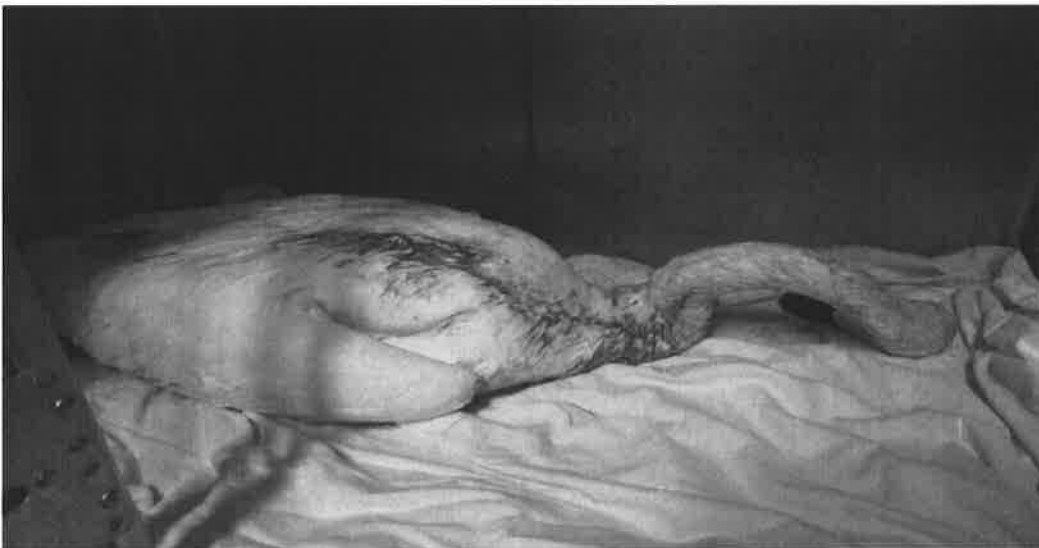
In December of 2014 a Good Samaritan called us about this Great Blue Heron that was unable to stand or fly in Hillsboro. The bird was brought to the Wildlife Care Center where it was found that the bird was in shock and had a compound fracture on the left wing. X-Rays showed this fracture was caused by the bird being illegally shot. Unable to treat the injury, the bird was euthanized that day.



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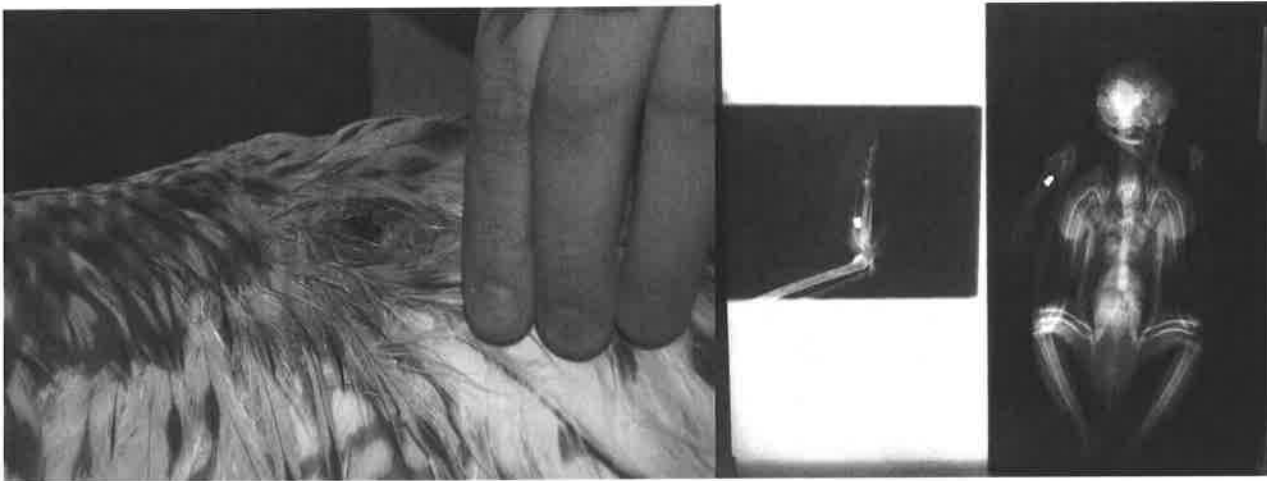
This adult Trumpeter Swan was brought from Banks, Oregon to the Wildlife Care Center the same day as the Great Blue Heron above. The swan had apparently fallen out of the sky into a transformer causing the power to go off in the area. The swan arrived cold, emaciated, covered in blood and had a badly fractured leg. The picture below shows the bird as it came into our facility. The x-Ray showed 4 pellets; one in the neck, two in the abdomen, and one in the leg causing the fracture. The leg was splinted but the bird died as a result of its injuries.



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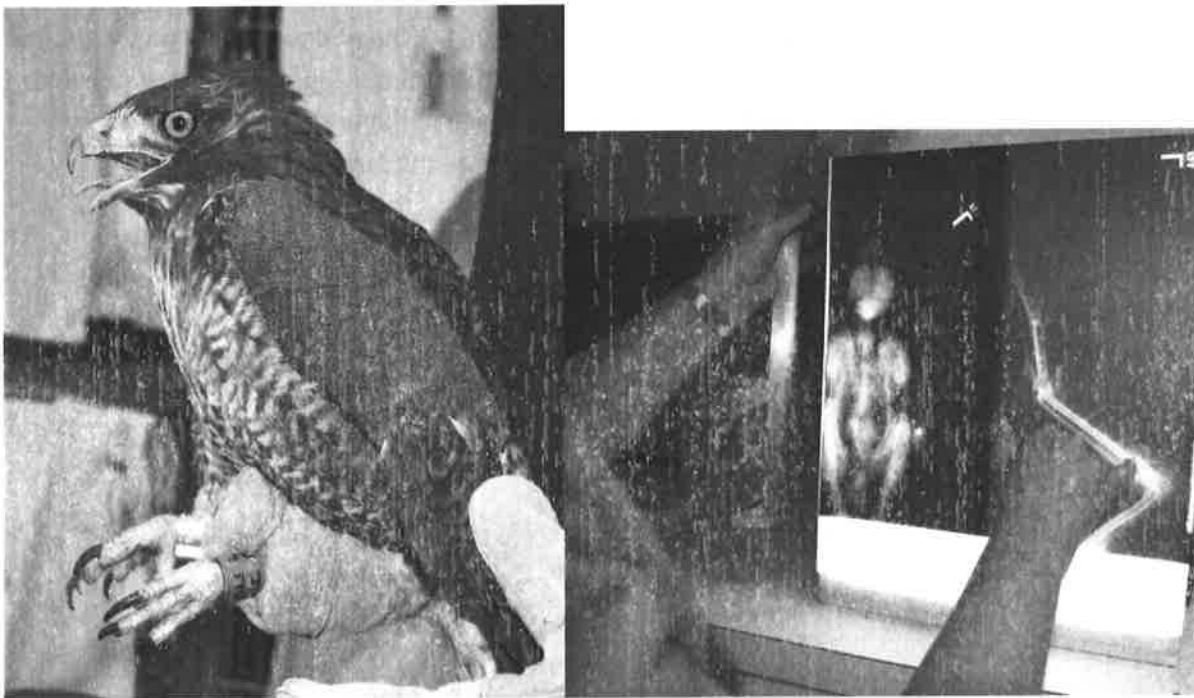
RTHA 2680-12

This Red-Tailed Hawk was brought in December 2012 from Ridgefield, Washington. The hawk was unable to fly because it had been illegally shot. The bullet had caused substantial injury to the left wing tip. Because the injury was not treatable, the bird had to be put down.



RTHA 2078-12

This federally banded Red Tailed Hawk was brought to us from Vancouver Washington. The bird was found because it was unable to fly. X-rays showed an injury from it being illegally shot. We tried to save the bird, hopeful that we could wrap the wing and it would mend. Unfortunately, because of the damage from the bullet the wing was never able to heal properly and after two months the bird had to be euthanized.



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GBHE 536-14

This Great Blue Heron was picked up by staff from a residence in downtown SW Portland in May 2014. The caller was concerned about the injured heron in her yard that couldn't get out. After some talk she had admitted that her husband had shot the bird because it had been eating their koi fish. X-Rays confirmed a bullet causing a compound fracture of its wing. Because the bone was shattered we were unable to treat the fracture and the heron had to be euthanized that same day.



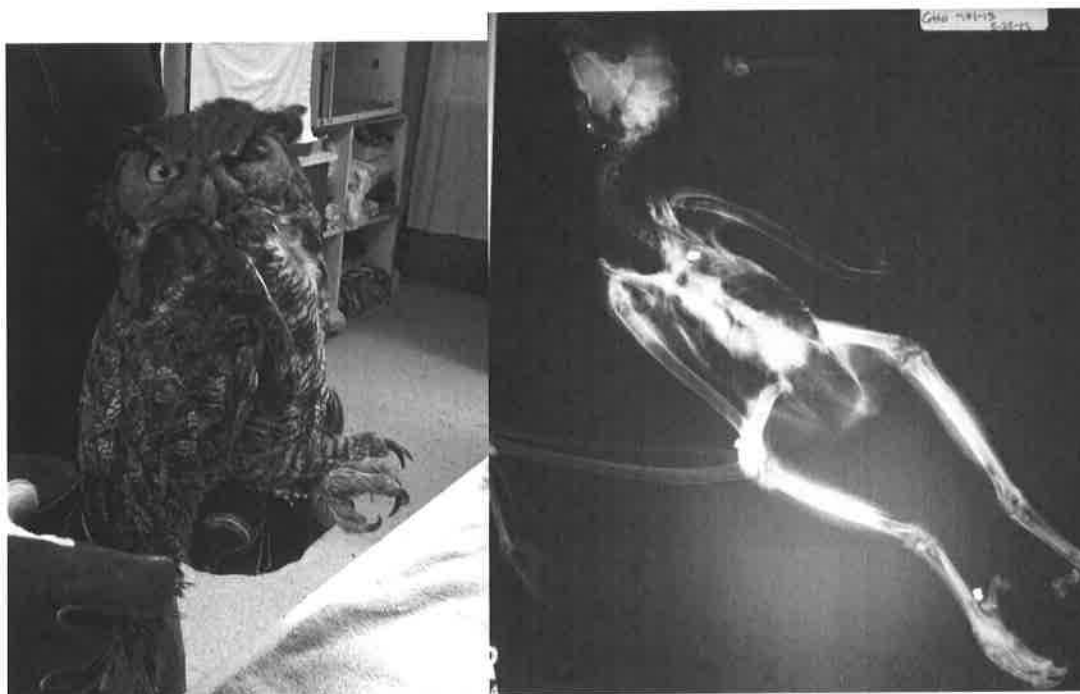
BAEA 143-14

This adult female Bald Eagle was picked up in Camas, Washington in February of 2014. The bird was found on the ground and unable to stand or fly away from the people who found her. She had multiple soft tissue injuries on her wings. We x-rayed this bird to check for shot and we found that she had at least 4 pellets causing her injuries. Luckily this bird was able to be rehabilitated and released 6 months later. We were never able to remove the pellets.

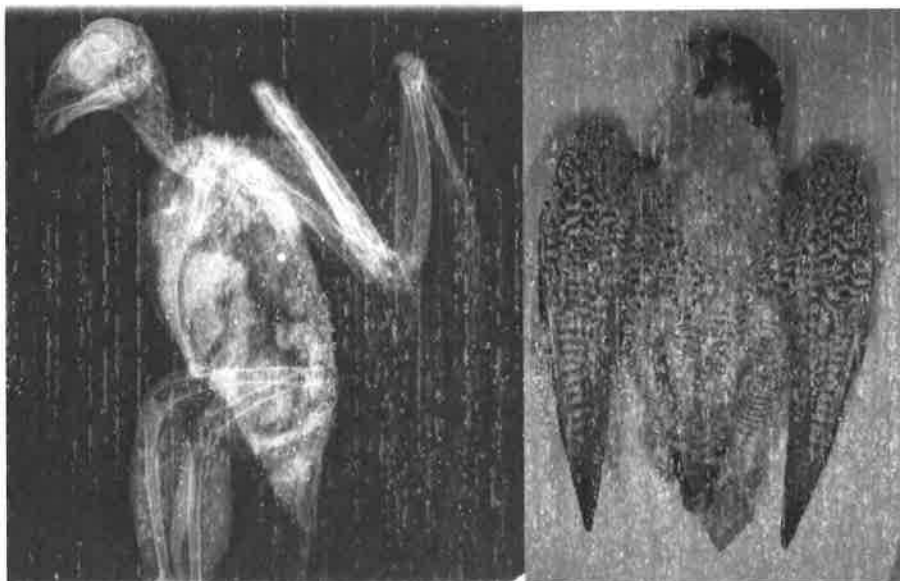


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GHOW 751-13: We received an adult Great Horned Owl in May of 2013. This bird had a dislocated elbow, was in shock and severely emaciated. This bird has been illegally shot three times, once in the chest, once in the knee and another in the foot. Our Veterinarlan estimated that this bird suffered for over one week before someone found it and brought it in. The bird was euthanized because of his injuries.



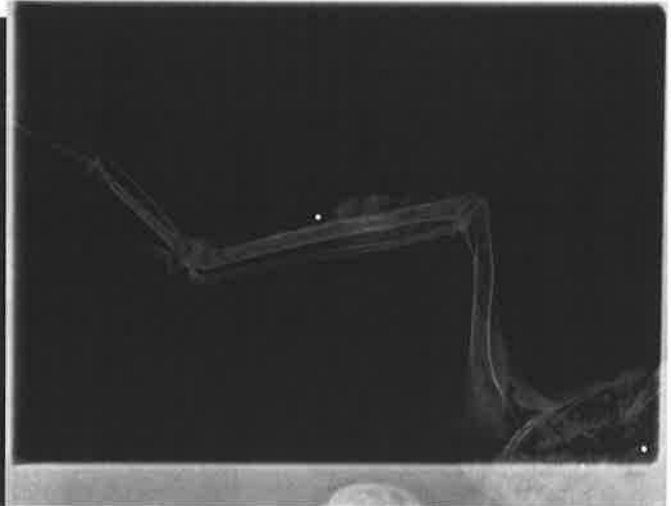
PEFA 189-11: We received an adult male Peregrine Falcon in March of 2011. A Good Samaritan had reported the bird on side of Hwy 240 dazed; as she walked by to investigate, bird walked out into road and was hit by car; the bird was dead on arrival. On x-ray it showed that the bird had a bullet lodged next to its spine.



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RTHA 2617-14

Just one month ago we received in a Red-Tailed Hawk from Sandy, Oregon. This bird was thin and had a broken foot and wing because it was illegally shot. The bird is still in our care but doesn't look good. Neurologically the bird isn't acting normally. We will continue to care for this bird until it either gets better or must be euthanized as a result of its injuries.



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