



## ***Do You Know.....?***

### ***the law?***

Way back when, wildlife was considered to be inexhaustible. During John James Audubon's life, he dined on an enormous variety of birds including Curlew, Kingfishers, Robins, Junco and practically every other species. It was reported that some forty-eight thousand Golden Plovers were slaughtered by French gunners near New Orleans in a single day! Of course, most of us are familiar with the plight of the Passenger Pigeon that used to be so numerous as to darken the sky. One northern flight of Passenger Pigeons was estimated to be at least 300 miles long, 1 mile wide and continued for 14 hours; it contained an estimated 3 billion, 717 million birds. In less than 60 years, this bird was virtually extinct due, in large part, to uncontrolled hunting. A variety of other species were brought to the brink of extinction by egg collectors and the millinery trade.

Around the turn of the century, the US Federal government finally decided some protection was necessary and the Lacey Act was passed in 1900. This act made it illegal to transport birds killed in violation of state laws across state lines. This was a good first step but the real turning point came in 1918 when the Migratory Bird Treaty was signed between the US and Great Britain (on behalf of Canada). Similar treaties were signed with Mexico, Japan and the Soviet Union. These treaties made it illegal to take specified birds except for scientific or propagation purposes. Specific hunting seasons were established, not to exceed three and a half months, for migratory game birds.

Following these laws, the Bald Eagle Protection Act and the Endangered Species Acts strengthened protection to species that were in special jeopardy. At this time, it is a violation of Federal

and/or State law to sell, purchase, take or possess any wild migratory birds, their parts (feathers, for example), nests, or eggs, and prohibits the interstate transportation of wild migratory birds taken contrary to law. It also empowers the federal government to regulate the hunting season for migratory game birds, bag limits, how these birds may be taken and their possession, transportation and importation. It also controls taking birds for breeding or scientific and educational purposes. Exceptions can be allowed for the control of those birds causing damage to agricultural or other interests.

Now what, you may ask, do all of these laws have to do with you? First, one does have to remember the intent of these laws. Just because one is not allowed to possess a wild bird does not mean you will be hunted down and shot on sight if you pick up an injured Robin (or hawk) and take it to a licensed rehabilitator. If your child brings home a feather found on the ground, it is not necessary to leave town so the "wildlife police" don't haul you off to "The Big House." What these laws mean is that NO ONE may intentionally kill, injure, or even irritate wild birds. It is illegal to stomp on their eggs, destroy their nests, set your dog on them, throw rocks at them, shoot them, or in any other manner cause them distress. If a flock of birds is creating damage or is deemed to be creating a nuisance, a special permit must be obtained from the US Fish and Wildlife Service prior to initiating any sort of corrective measures. Permission may be granted if the birds in question are, in fact, causing substantial monetary loss due to crop damage or are creating a serious nuisance or health risk but the permission must be requested. One cannot simply decide that a flock of geese, for example, is making a mess; this is a Federal case. Failure to comply with these laws can be a misdemeanor and be punishable by a heavy fine and/or imprisonment.

***NOW YOU KNOW!!!!!!***

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