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Summary

In the 1930s pioneering conservationists such as Rosalie Barrow Edge and Oregon's R.E. Clanton used property rights and markets to protect wildlife. Today, an ever-growing number of private nonprofit and for-profit organizations do the same. Their success demonstrates that private, voluntary solutions are an effective, viable alternative to public ownership of land and government command-and-control of the environment.

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“The privately-run, voluntarily supported Hawk Mountain Sanctuary is one of the premier hawk-watching sites in the world.”

Flock to Hawk Mountain

by Bart Frazier

Rosalie Barrow Edge should be considered a hero to conservationists. Nearly 70 years ago, in 1934, she founded Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Kempton, Pennsylvania. At a time when our country's economy was in shambles and socialist thought was in the vanguard, Edge established the first refuge for hawks in the world—without the aid of government.

In the 1920s and 1930s, attitudes towards wildlife were different than they are today. Vegetarianism was not common, fur was not frowned upon, and hunting was more widely accepted. Birds of prey were considered pests and vermin instead of the beautiful and graceful creatures that they are. They killed farmers' poultry and were known to eat the songbirds that many people tried to attract to their yards. The Pennsylvania Game Commission even had a bounty of \$5 per bird for Northern Goshawks, a woodland hawk. Because of these attitudes, hawks were killed indiscriminately.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (HMS) sits atop the Kittatiny Ridge in the Appalachian Mountains of Pennsylvania, a major flyway for migrating hawks. As hawks migrate south, they are funneled into large concentrations when they encounter the Kittatiny, following it south in sometimes uncountable numbers. What is now North Lookout on Hawk Mountain used to be a shotgunner's delight; it provided the perfect place for hunters to practice their shooting skills before the hunting season began. The number of hawks killed there was astounding. The archives at HMS contain photos of row upon row of dead hawks lined upon the ground from a single day's kill.

Richard Pough, an ornithologist from Philadelphia, visited the area in 1932 and photographed the grisly scene. In New York City in 1933 Pough addressed the Hawk and Owl Society and presented his photographs to its members. Edge, who started the Emergency Conservation Committee (ECC) in 1929 to enlighten the public about birdlife conservation issues, was further motivated by Pough's lecture.

In June 1934, Edge visited the mountain with Pough and her son. A few weeks later, with \$500 raised through the ECC, she obtained a lease on the 1,400 acres that would eventually become HMS. In September, Edge installed the first warden to stop the shooting. By 1935, she had raised the \$3,500 needed to buy the

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land outright—a lot of money at that time, especially during the Great Depression. In 1938 the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association was incorporated to hold and manage Hawk Mountain, and Rosalie Edge served as its first president.

Today, the privately-run, voluntarily supported Hawk Mountain Sanctuary is one of the premier hawk-watching sites in the world. Seventy thousand people visit it every year to see the 18,000 hawks that fly past North Lookout during the fall. HMS has a full-time staff of 16, as well as a cadre of interns and visiting scholars who come from around the globe to use the research facilities there. All of this is supported by voluntary donations, user fees, and membership fees. Last year, HMS had 10,000 dues-paying members. Membership benefits include access to the sanctuary, a subscription to HMS's magazine, a discount at the sanctuary's bookstore, invitations to classes and lectures, and a members-only campground.

This was all made possible by the charitable efforts of Rosalie Barrow Edge. Her willingness to devote time and resources to a cause for which she cared deeply resulted in something so special that certainly even she could not foresee what HMS would become.

Sea Lion Caves on the Oregon Coast near Florence offers a similar example. Robert J. Smith, director of outreach at the Center for Private Conservation, notes, "In 1920, the state legislature requested the State Fish Commission to exterminate the seals and sea lions along the coast" because they were considered a threat by the commercial fishing industry. The bounty was raised to \$5 for each one killed. In 1927, R.E. Clanton purchased America's largest sea cave and opened it as a business in 1932, two years before Edge founded Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. Sea Lion Caves provided a haven for the animals until public opinion changed and laws were passed to protect them. Today, this for-profit business serves as the only mainland breeding and wintering area for these mammals.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Sea Lion Caves are among the ever-growing number of private non-profit and for-profit conservation initiatives across the country. Their success is shining evidence that property rights and markets are an effective, viable alternative to public ownership of land and government command-and-control of the environment.

Bart Frazier is an associate of Cascade Policy Institute, a Portland, Oregon think tank, and program director at the Future of Freedom Foundation (www.fff.org). Information on Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Sea Lion Caves can be found at www.hawkmountain.org and www.sealioncaves.com, respectively.

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