

LITTLE FALCON PROTECTED

At last some of our antiquated laws are slowly emerging to become victims of modern day commonsense.

In the *Government Gazette* of May 28, 1976 the Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife declared a new list of unprotected fauna in Western Australia. This appeared in S.W.A.N.S. Vol. 6 No. 2.

The Western Australian Wildlife Authority had recommended that the Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*) be deleted from the new list as it appeared that the bird was not causing the damage to stock and property as first suspected many years ago.

A situation had also arisen whereby the markings of the bird produced a likeness similar to that of a Peregrine Falcon. This led to the situation where the Little Falcon could be indiscriminately shot by gun happy vandals and the very similar Peregrine (a rare and endangered species) therefore placed in jeopardy and the warrant of a \$1 000 fine.

The Agriculture Protection Board raised no objection to the reclassification providing there was a liberal policy regarding the issue of damage licenses to people whose pigeons or poultry were being attacked.

Commercial poultry growers have fully confined premises which prevents their exotic stocks from intermingling and competing with indigenous birds; a paradox exists however in the case of domestic pigeons (also exotics) which are regularly released for exercise and sporting purposes.

According to the Wildlife Conservation Act, pigeons are unprotected introduced fauna and whilst they are the hobby of some breeders, these birds at large are considered by many to be exotic intrusions to the State's indigenous fauna.

Birds of Prey have been persecuted by man since time immemorial; whether protected or unprotected, it is folly to believe that they can be wilfully exterminated in preference to exotics.