



All About R.A.T.S. Raptors Are The Solution

Raptors Are The Solution, a Project of Earth Island Institute, educates people about the ecological role of birds of prey in urban and wild areas and about the danger they and other wildlife face from the widespread use of rat poison.

RATS was formed in 2011 after Cooper's hawks began dying on the streets of Berkeley, CA after ingesting poisoned rodents. We stepped into a gap—educating people about the dangers of rat poison in the food web—not being filled by any other nonprofit, large or small. Today, we partner with other NGOs, agencies, scientists, municipalities, and individuals to work toward eliminating toxic rodenticides from the food web. Through our Owl Wise Leader Program, we incentivize businesses, municipalities, and communities to stop using poison and switch to non-toxic methods of rodent control.



Pamela Rose Hawken

Background

California and other states are experiencing an epidemic of wildlife deaths due to rat poison. When rat poison makes its way up the food chain—when predatory animals eat rodents that have been poisoned—they too are poisoned, and either die or become very ill and succumb to diseases they could ordinarily survive. Rat poison can also weaken these animals, making them less able to thrive.

Throughout California, hawks, owls, vultures, foxes, fishers, weasels, skunks, bears, mountain lions, bobcats, and coyotes (among others) have been poisoned. Mountain lions, bobcats, and coyotes are all falling victim to mange, due to their immune systems being compromised—new studies show that rat poison can impact the genes that regulate the immune system.

Although the state of California removed some of the worst poisons from consumer shelves in 2014, animals are still dying and being sickened because the pest control industry was exempted from the rules and because consumers are still allowed to use a variety of other poisons.

Our Approach

RATS takes a multi-pronged approach to addressing this problem, including large-scale public education campaigns, incentivizing businesses and agricultural operations to switch from poison to non-toxic means of rodent control, legislative efforts, and, when necessary, litigation. In just seven years, our ads on public transit and billboards reached over 16 million people. Our educational materials have been translated into over a dozen languages and are being used around the world and throughout the U.S. In 2018, The International Owl Center honored RATS with a special achievement award for conserving owls and other raptors.

In addition to our main office in Berkeley, we have chapters (all run by volunteers) in Seattle, Santa Cruz, San Luis Obispo, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Texas.



RATS is a fiscally sponsored project of Earth Island Institute, a 501c3 nonprofit organization (federal tax ID 94-2889684), given a four-star rating by Charity Navigator for wise fiscal management.



Pamela Rose Hawken

Timeline of Progress

2011

RATS forms in 2011 after its founders discover Cooper's hawks dying on the streets of Berkeley from anticoagulant poisoning. RATS begins to educate the public through large-scale public awareness campaigns and, with support from a broad coalition of groups, to push for better regulation of these products.

2014

California removes second generation anticoagulants (SGARs) from consumer shelves. Animals continue to be poisoned because the pest control industry is still allowed to widely use these poisons.

2015

The US EPA removes SGARs from consumer shelves nationwide.

2018

RATS files lawsuit against the CA Dept. of Pesticide Regulation seeking reevaluation of SGARs and first generation anticoagulants (FGARs) due to their impacts on non-target wildlife.

DPR agrees to reevaluate SGARs.

2020

The CA legislature passes AB 1788, which puts a moratorium on SGARs until DPR finishes its reevaluation. Governor Gavin Newsom signs the bill in September.

2021

AB 1788 goes into effect. RATS pushes forward to have DPR reevaluate diphacinone, a FGAR that has been linked to immune system impacts in bobcats and other wildlife, and to the deaths and illnesses of many other wildlife species.

Note: California is one of just a few states with funding to test wildlife for anticoagulant poisoning. RATS is working with a congressperson to investigate the idea of national funding for all states to do the same.