An Interview with Donny Moss

These are questions (in red) Donny Moss (theirturn.net) asked me a few years ago (2017) in an informal, unpublished interview, and they're followed by my answers. It seemed particularly relevant now given the recent turn of world events.

(a) Why isn't killing geese and other birds an effective way to prevent [bird/airplane] collisions?

The inconsistencies in the kill contracts and other reports from USDA Wildlife Services suggest that the killings ARE NOT MEANT to reduce collisions. And, as you know, wildlife collisions have skyrocketed since the mass extermination program began in 2009, even though according to an FAA report there's been a minuscule decrease in the cost of property damage for commercial airplane companies—yet no decrease at all for other airline entities, whether police, private, business, or government.

(b) If killing doesn't prevent collisions, then why is the Port Authority using our tax dollars to do it?

I can't say I know with certainty. And yet, insofar as the mass murder of innocents destroys human morale and stifles empathy, it would seem tantamount to psychological preparation for the fascism that is clearly encroaching.

The USDA's war on NYC's Canada Geese—and Mute Swans and other wild birds—is part of a much larger war on wildlife that the USDA is waging across the country, mostly in service to the meat industry. About 4 million animals each year—eagles, bears, deer, wolves, wild horses, buffalo, coyotes, foxes, doves, and obviously swans, geese and many others—are brutally trapped, tortured, and killed by Wildlife Services or other comparable agencies. And if you look at the USDA's approach to animals generally—mass extermination, gassing, painful surgeries without anesthesia, sadistic experimentation, extreme confinement, prejudice against a particular group [Canada Geese and not Snow Geese, Mute Swans and not Trumpeter Swans], stealing babies from mothers, and adults from their communities, employing 1) ecology's dubious native/non-native distinction to justify their crimes and 2) countless euphemisms to cover them up—all this seems to bear the unmistakable stamp of Nazi consciousness.

(c) What are other non-lethal approaches to preventing collisions between birds and planes, and have they been shown to be effective?

The most common approach that until very recently the USDA called non-lethal is egg addling (shaking) or egg oiling. The USDA/WS agents, for example, typically coat the fertilized eggs of Canada Geese with corn oil so that the baby inside—whether a newly formed embryo or about-to-be-hatched gosling—slowly suffocates to death. So it's not really non-lethal.

The one effective and truly non-lethal way to prevent bird strikes is avian radar. Avian radar is used successfully in Israel, Europe, and some cities in the United States, though it is not yet used in New York.

(d) What can people do to speak out against killing resident birds and other wildlife?

(1) Fly less, or, better yet, boycott the airline industry. That industry, both directly and indirectly, is responsible for the deaths of so many birds and other creatures each year, and it's such a major contributor to the greenhouse gas explosion that's destabilizing the climate, that it's surprising governments themselves are not placing a temporary moratorium on air travel.

(2) Email the governor of your state to find out if he or she signed a kill contract with Wildlife Services. (Also ask the mayor of your city.) If yes, initiate a campaign or petition to cancel that contract and not sign another. Urge that avian radar be installed in all state airports.

(3) Send out Freedom of Information inquiries to find out details of the USDA's activities against geese and other wild birds. How, where, and when are they being targeted? Are they being gassed? (Gassing is a particularly sadistic way of killing water birds such as geese who are able to hold their breath a long time.) Organize demonstrations and try to get media attention.

(4) If there's a USDA call for public comments on a new mass extermination plan, send a strong statement rejecting it and get as many others to do so as possible.