

# PEREGRINE FALCON (*FALCO PEREGRINUS*)

## T H R E A T E N E D

### Description

Three subspecies of peregrine falcon can be found in Canada, but only the *anatum* subspecies breeds in Alberta.

This falcon prefers to nest on the ledges of rocky cliffs or cutbanks, although some nest on high buildings or bridges in urban areas.

The peregrine is considered by many to be the world's fastest animal. In level flight it can reach speeds of up to 100 kilometres per hour; when diving to capture prey (mainly birds), nearly 300 kilometres per hour.

The peregrine falcon is migratory, arriving in Alberta in April and leaving by October



### History



The peregrine falcon has never been common, but before the middle of the 20th century, it could be found in every natural region in Canada. In the mid-1960's, peregrine numbers dropped dramatically, primarily because of organochlorine pesticide (mainly DDT) contamination. The pesticides caused reproductive failure, including the thinning of eggshells. The decline was especially pronounced in the *anatum* subspecies.

By 1972, DDT was banned in Canada and the United States and intensive management to recover the peregrine falcon began. Now, after more than 25 years of management and reintroductions, the Alberta subspecies appears to be increasing.

At present, approximately 50 breeding pairs of peregrines are known to exist in Alberta. In the early 1970's, only 3 nesting pairs were found in northwestern Alberta, and only 1 pair was known south of the boreal forest. Researchers were familiar with at least 70 historic breeding sites south of the 56th parallel before the population declined.

The present range of this species in Alberta is patchy and discontinuous. The birds are most likely to be seen in the northeast corner of the province, in or near Edmonton and Calgary, and on cliffs along rivers in central and southern Alberta (Bow and Red Deer river drainages).

### Management

In 1978, the peregrine falcon was declared an "endangered" species by COSEWIC, and a national recovery plan was approved in 1987. Restriction of organochlorine pesticide use in North America, declining use of DDT in other parts of the world and innovative management efforts have resulted in a partial recovery, which has been particularly rapid in the last five to ten years.

Large-scale reintroduction of captive-raised peregrines was discontinued in Alberta in 1996, although some population management is ongoing. Because the Alberta population is still very small and most of the current population in southern Alberta is made up of birds reared in captivity, the peregrine falcon in the province

remains vulnerable.

Based on the recommendations of the Endangered Species Conservation Committee, the status of the peregrine falcon in Alberta has been downlisted to "threatened" from "endangered."

Within two years, a provincial recovery plan for the peregrine falcon will be prepared. Management of peregrines while the recovery plan is being completed includes participation in annual surveys of provincial peregrine populations, and supplementation (with captive-bred chicks) of peregrine nests in southern Alberta.

## Status

<b>Alberta:</b>	Threatened; downlisted from Endangered in 2000
<b>Canada (COSEWIC):</b>	Threatened ( <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i> ); downlisted from Endangered in 1999
<b>USA:</b>	Delisted (removed from national endangered species list) in 1999; Montana—Endangered

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- As a land manager:
  - Your cooperation in reporting any observations of peregrine falcon eyries to your nearest Fish and Wildlife Division office is encouraged.
  - Please feel free to contact wildlife management staff at your nearest Fish and Wildlife Division office for information on ways that you can minimize impacts on peregrine falcons, ways that you can help peregrine falcons, and ways that you can assist in monitoring the status of peregrine falcon populations.
- As a member of the public:
  - Your voluntary cooperation in restricting your access to peregrine falcon territories during the nesting season is requested. Disturbance at these sites can be disruptive to mating and breeding activity and can result in failed nesting attempts.
  - Your cooperation in reporting any observations of peregrine falcon eyries to your nearest Fish and Wildlife Division office is encouraged.
- As an industrial developer:
  - You should be aware that peregrine falcons are susceptible to nest failure if disturbed.
  - You can assist in peregrine falcon recovery efforts by reporting any peregrine falcon nest territories to your nearest Fish and Wildlife Division office.
  - Please contact wildlife management staff in your nearest Fish and Wildlife Division office to discuss ways that you can modify industrial activity to minimize impacts on peregrine falcon eyries close to your operations.

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ALBERTA'S ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSERVATION COMMITTEE