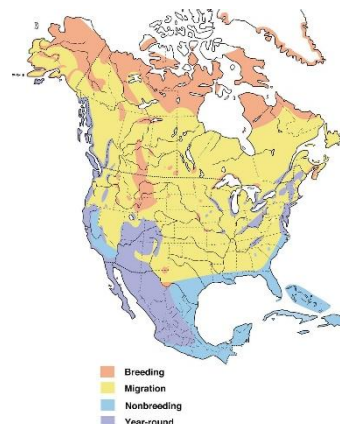


Peregrine Falcon



Classification

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Falconiformes
Family: Falconidae
Genus: *Falco*
Species: *peregrinus*



Range, Habitat, Conservation Status

- **Range:** Found worldwide, except for rainforests and cold, dry Arctic regions. One of the most widespread terrestrial vertebrate species in the world.
- **Habitat:** Open country, cliffs (mountains to coast), and sometimes cities. In the Eastern United States, it is mainly found in urban and suburban areas on building ledges and bridges. Over its wide range, found in wide variety of open habitats, from tundra to desert mountains.
- **Conservation Status:** Least Concern with numbers declining and local declines of concern along the East North and South American coast.

Physical Characteristics

- **Body Length:** 14.2 to 19.3 inches (36-49 cm)
- **Wingspan:** 39.4 to 43.3 inches (100-110 cm)
- **Weight:** 18.7 to 56.4 ounces (530-1600 g)
- **Lifespan:** Up to 13 years in the wild with the oldest recorded in the wild being 19 years old.
- **Identifying Traits:** Adults are large falcons about the size of a crow. Long pointed wings and long tail. Folded wings reach the tail tip. Dark head with white upper chest, throat and white cheek mark. Whitish underparts with black barred and spotted underparts. Heavily barred in medium grey throughout wings, body and tail. Sexes are similar with females slightly larger. Juveniles are more heavily patterned as well as brownish from above. Patterning varies greatly across its wide global range.

Behaviors

- **Feeding:** Mainly bird hunters, including starlings, pigeons, blackbirds, jays, shorebirds, and waterfowl.
- **Breeding:** Breed between March and May, depending on how far north they are breeding. Females usually lay their eggs in mid-May, and they usually hatch in mid-June.
- **Nesting:** Like most falcons, they do not build their own nests. They lay their eggs in scrapes, or small depressions they make in the soil or gravel of a cliff ledge. Sometimes, they use abandoned stick nests that have been built in trees by other species. Today, more Peregrine Falcons are making their homes in cities where they nest on ledges of tall buildings and bridges.
- **Migration:** Permanent resident on northwest coast and in some temperate regions. Northern breeding pairs are long-distance migrants, many going to South America. Migrants often travel along coastlines and regularly occur further out to sea.
- **Call:** Rasping kack-kack-kack-kack, usually heard at the nest, but otherwise generally silent.

Fun Facts!

- The word "peregrine" means "wanderer" or "pilgrim," and Peregrine Falcons occur all over the world except for Antarctica.
- They are very fast flyers! While flying, they reach an average of 25 to 34 mph and while pursuing prey they have been recorded reaching 69 mph. On top of that during a hunting stoop, which can be at heights over 0.62 miles, they have been known to reach speeds greater than 200 mph while swooping downwards towards their prey.

Importance

High level predators that play an important role in regulating populations of their prey.

Threats and Conservation measures

Conservation status is of least concern and numbers have rebounded following declines from DDT pesticide exposure in 1970s. The Peregrine Falcon was removed from the Endangered Species list in 1999, thanks to efforts by "The Peregrine Fund" and many other organizations and individuals. While numbers have recovered, the falcon is considered threatened in North Carolina because of the low number of breeding pairs. The main threats across the country are

car collisions and electric pylons, however, along the East Coast of America the decline in populations is attributed to HPAI infection and pesticide use. Conservation centers are working with utility companies to retrofit existing power poles by installing insulating covers, installing perch shields and adding safe artificial nesting platforms. To prevent car collision, ask visitors to refrain from throwing food out of the car window, which attracts prey on the side of the road, such as rodents (<https://carolinaraptorcenter.org/raptor-hospital/>).

Sources

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