



Red-listed species

are those that have been legally designated, or are being considered for legal designation, as Endangered or Threatened

Blue-listed species

are considered vulnerable because they have characteristics that make them particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events..

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus

At a Glance

The Peregrine Falcon's well-known dark head and "moustache" give it a hooded appearance. The adult's back is blue-grey; underneath, it is paler with dark barring. The coastal subspecies, Peale's Peregrine Falcon (*F.p.pealei*) is generally darker and larger than the rarer American Peregrine Falcon (*F.p.anatum*) of the interior, which often has a salmon colour on its chest. The Peregrine is very fast, flying with rapid beats of its tapered wings. Peregrine Falcons average about 42 centimetres long, with a wingspan of 105 cm. They weigh from 450-950 grams, the female being larger than the male. The sound Peregrines use for calling to each other sounds like "we-chew." When defending their nest, they make a loud, rapid "kek-kek-kek."

Home Sweet Home

Peregrines usually nest on rock ledges high on steep cliffs, mostly in undisturbed areas. "Nest" is hardly the word, though; the eggs are laid in a "scrape" on a part of the ledge that is sheltered by a rock overhang. Sometimes they may take over a cliffside stick nest used by a Common Raven or a Red-tailed Hawk. They have also been reported to use stick nests of other raptors in trees, and a few have nested on tall buildings in cities.

This is the Life

One clutch of three or four eggs is laid each year. Hatching takes about 30 days. The female does most of the incubating, while the male guards the territory and hunts for food. The young are able to fly five to seven weeks after hatching, though both parents provide food to the young for several more weeks.

The same pair of birds may use the same nest site for many years, but may choose different ledges in different years. Peregrines have been known to live up to 20 years in the wild.

What's on the Menu?

Colonial seabirds such as Ancient Murrelets are the preferred food of the Peale's Peregrine Falcon, although many kinds of small waterbirds are eaten. Falcon nests are often located near Ancient Murrelet colonies. The American Peregrine feeds on crows, robins, swallows and pigeons, and on wetland birds such as ducks and shorebirds.

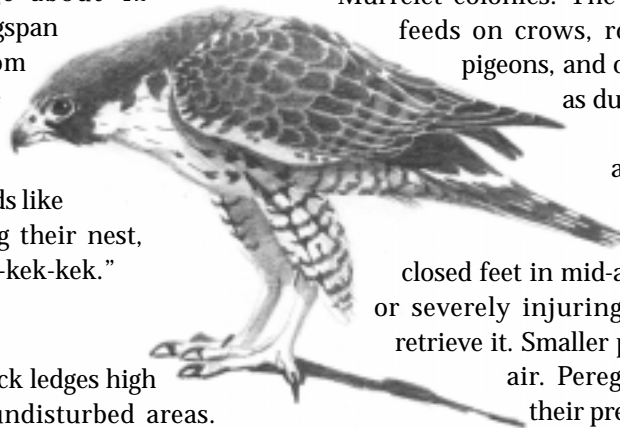
The falcon makes a high-speed dive from a great height, hitting the quarry with its closed feet in mid-air and usually killing or severely injuring it, then landing to retrieve it. Smaller prey is caught in mid-air. Peregrines will finish off their prey, if necessary, with a bite at the base of the skull. All falcons have a special notch on their beak for this purpose.

Where and When

The Peregrine Falcon occurs worldwide. There are three North American subspecies, all of which occur in B.C. (The third subspecies, the Tundra Peregrine, breeds along the Arctic coast and is rarely seen here.)

The American Peregrine Falcon breeds wherever there are sufficient concentrations of prey along rivers and wetlands in North America. Most Canadian birds migrate to the southern United States, Mexico and Central and South America.

The heart of the Peale's Peregrine range is in the Queen Charlotte Islands, where 70 to 80 pairs are known to breed each year. Other pairs breed on





British Columbia's Wildlife at Risk

NO KIDDING!

The Peregrine Falcon's speed in a hunting dive, or "stoop," is legendary. The official speed record holder of the entire animal kingdom, it has been clocked at over 300 km/h!

The scientific name for the Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*, means "wandering falcon." Its name reflects its worldwide distribution, and the long migrations of some populations.

In some parts of North America, Peregrines have been re-introduced into cities, where they nest high on the ledges of skyscrapers. They prey on pigeons, and are appreciated by city-dwellers for discouraging pigeons from forming large nesting colonies.

Originally, the American Peregrine Falcon preyed heavily on the now-extinct Passenger Pigeon.

other coastal islands. Most Peale's Peregrines do not migrate in winter.

Peregrines are not a common sight. In winter, coastal estuaries are a good place to see Peregrines in B.C. In summer, look for them around large cliffs beside major rivers and wetlands in the interior, and beside the ocean.

How They're Doing

The Peregrine once lived on every continent except the Antarctic. In the 1960s and 1970s, its population crashed, mainly due to the widespread use of the pesticide DDT, which caused eggshell thinning and unusual behaviour in adults.

Peale's Peregrine Falcon seems to be stable in B.C. However, it has a restricted breeding distribution and small numbers. Its food supply of colonial seabirds is threatened in some areas by habitat loss and by introduction of alien predators to their breeding areas. Because of this, Peale's Peregrine Falcon is on the Blue List.

The American Peregrine Falcon occurred in agricultural areas where most DDT was once used, and migrates to areas south of the United States where such chemicals may still be used. This, combined with habitat changes resulting in lower prey abundance, resulted in the subspecies nearly disappearing from B.C. This subspecies is on the Red List.

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has designated the *pealei* subspecies as Vulnerable and the *anatum* subspecies as Threatened.

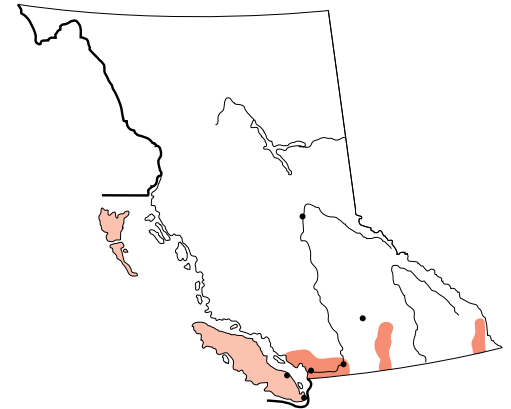
How We're Helping

Little direct help is required to protect the Peregrine. The main threat has been through the food chain, either by reduced prey supply, or by toxins accumulated through their prey. The use of DDT and related toxins has been banned in Canada and the United States.

In recent years, Peregrines have been reintroduced and re-established across their former range.

Present breeding distribution of the Peregrine Falcon in British Columbia

- *F.p.anatum*
- *F.p.pealei*



Peregrines, their nests and eggs are protected under the British Columbia Wildlife Act.

How You Can Help

Support the continued ban of DDT and other environmental toxins. Avoid rock-climbing and other activities near active nests.

Report sightings of birds and nests to the Conservation Data Centre in Victoria. This will help to provide more information about the numbers of birds in the province. Include the location, date, number of birds and habitat, and any specific behaviour noted.

You can find out more about the Wildlife Branch and Conservation Data Centre at:

<http://www.elp.gov.bc.ca>

Conservation Data Centre
Resources Inventory Branch
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Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks

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