

Peregrine Falcon

Scientific Name: *Falco peregrinus*

Class: Aves

Order: Falconiformes

Family: Falconidae



Peregrine Falcons are one of the largest falcons in North America. They have long, pointed wings and a long tail. As with most raptor species the Peregrine Falcon males are smaller than females. Peregrine females are called Merlins and small males are called Gyrfalcons. Adults are blue gray at the top of their body with barred underparts. They have a dark head with thick sideburns. Juveniles are heavily marked, with vertical streaks instead of horizontal bars on the breast. Peregrine Falcons are one of the world's fastest birds and they can dive from vast heights to strike prey. They can reach speeds of up to 200 miles per hour. Peregrines are found on six continents though was seriously endangered in the mid-20th century because of the effects of DDT and other persistent pesticides

Range

All continents except Antarctica

Habitat

Seacoasts, mountains, rocky crags, temperate forests

Gestation

Incubation: about 30 days

Litter

Clutch: usually three

Behavior

A fast, dashing flier, travelling everywhere at speed in level, driving flight or in spectacular dives. Perches for long periods on ledges or trees. Feeds on small to medium-sized birds, usually taken on the wing, then carried to a perch to be eaten. Often hunts in early morning and late evening in dim light. Nests on bare ledges, on high cliffs, often noisy in nest area with harsh screams "kak kak kak" and whines "keer-ik keer-ik".

Reproduction

No nest is made beyond scraping out a shallow cup on the shelf to hold the eggs. Sites are often re-used season after season, and pairs tend to frequent the nesting area for much of the year. They breed in early summer, the female laying her clutch of reddish-brown eggs during August or September. The sexes share the incubation duties, with the female doing the most. The eggs take about 30 days to hatch, and the nestling fledge in 35 to 42 days. At the time of hatching the chicks are covered in dense white down, but this is soon replaced by the juvenile plumage.

Wild Diet

Small to medium-sized birds, small mammals