

# PEREGRINE FALCON

*Falco peregrines*



A Peregrine Falcon is approximately 13-18" in length, 1-2.1 lbs and wingspan is 37-46" depends on sex.

Peregrine Falcon is most likely to be confused with Prairie Falcon, Merlin or the rare Gyrfalcon. Of these, the Prairie Falcon has the most similar size and shape, but it's found only in open areas of the West and is less tied to concentrations of shorebirds, ducks, or pigeons. Prairie Falcons are browner than Peregrines, with dark "armpit" patches under their wings. The average Merlin is substantially smaller than a Peregrine Falcon, with a more compact body, shorter wings, and a stockier appearance. They tend to target smaller birds and even dragonflies. Merlins lack the Peregrine's helmeted look and thick mustache or sideburn. The Gyrfalcon is bulkier than a Peregrine Falcon and is very rare in the continental United States. Gyrfalcons can take down larger birds like

Herring Gulls or Common Goldeneyes that a Peregrine can't really handle.

The word "peregrine" means "wanderer" or "pilgrim," and Peregrine Falcons occur all over the world and falco (Latin) refers to sickle-shaped talons or the shape of the wings in flight. In North America they breed in open landscapes with cliffs (or skyscrapers) for nest sites. They can be found up to about 12,000 feet, as well as along rivers and coastlines or in cities, where the local Rock Pigeon populations offer a reliable food supply. In migration and winter you can find Peregrine Falcons in nearly any open habitat, but with a greater likelihood along barrier islands, mudflats, coastlines, lake edges, and mountain chains.

Peregrine Falcons eat mostly birds, of an enormous variety—450 North American species have been documented as prey. Typical prey includes shorebirds, ptarmigan, ducks, grebes, gulls, storm-petrels, pigeons, and songbirds including jays, thrushes, longspurs, buntings, larks, waxwings, and starlings. Peregrine Falcons also eat substantial numbers of bats.

They are usually two years old when begin brooding. They do not make a nest, usually only a small scraping. Nests primarily on cliffs, but will use an old nest in trees, building ledges and bridges. They lay 3-4 eggs, with incubation done mostly by the female though male will help; incubation period of 33-35 days. Peregrine age at first flight is 39-46 days (male), 41-49 days (female). Young are brown and have buffy breast with streaking. Northern populations will migrate, following their food source. Return to same nest locations.



Juvenile



Juvenile in Flight

- Black hood
- Dark gray back
- Barred belly, legs, and tail
- Bright yellow legs

## Cool Facts

- People have trained falcons for hunting for over a thousand years, and the Peregrine Falcon was always one of the most prized birds. Efforts to breed the Peregrine in captivity and reestablish populations depleted during the DDT years were greatly assisted by the existence of methods of handling captive falcons developed by falconers.
- The Peregrine Falcon is a very fast flier, averaging 40-55 km/h (25-34 mph) in traveling flight, and reaching speeds up to 112 km/h (69 mph) in direct pursuit of prey. During its spectacular hunting stoop from heights of over 1 km (0.62 mi), the peregrine may reach speeds of 320 km/h (200 mph) as it drops toward its prey.
- The Peregrine Falcon is one of the most widespread birds in the world. It is found on all continents except Antarctica, and on many oceanic islands.



## **What is a Wildlife Rehabilitator?**

They wear many hats. They are a nurse, a caregiver, a janitor, a teacher and much more! They are **NOT** paid. Everything they do comes out of their own pocket. Their oath is to help wildlife that has been injured, orphaned or sick due to storms, cycle of life or humans. Our ultimate goal is to return them back to the wild.

### **How you can help your local rehabbers:**

Call them and ask what things they need. Give them a gift certificate to a place where they get supplies.

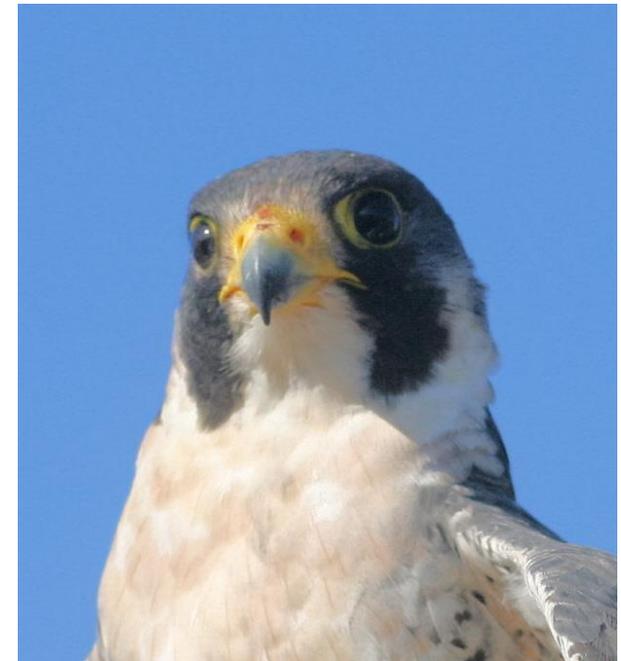
**In any State, you can call your local Game & Inland Fisheries, local Veterinarian, or animal shelter and they should have some phone numbers for local Wildlife Rehabilitators.**

**If you have any questions you may call Pearl Beamer, State & Federally licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator within the state of Virginia about wildlife. Pearl specializes in Raptors. 757-855-2922 (7am-7pm)**



## **Adult**

- **Black hood**
- **Dark gray back**
- **Barred belly, legs, and tail**
- **Bright yellow legs**



**Peregrine Falcon**  
**Falco peregrines**

Peregrine Falcons are the largest falcon over most of the continent, with long, pointed wings and a long tail. Be sure to look at shape as well as size—long primary feathers give the Peregrine a long-winged shape. As with most raptors, males are smaller than females, so Peregrines can overlap with large female Merlins or small male Gyrfalcons.



**Adult in Flight**