

Peregrine Falcon Background

How Peregrine Falcons Came to the Woodmen Tower

In the 1950s, the peregrine falcon population plummeted. The species was placed on the endangered list as scientists bred peregrines in captivity and released them into wild areas.

Some of these birds migrated to skyscrapers in eastern cities. As cliff dwellers, peregrine falcons flourished in urban settings, where tall buildings are plentiful. An abundance of pigeons and starlings supplied the falcons' diet.

Biologists recognized this adaptation to city buildings and began releasing them on urban rooftops. In 1988, the Nebraska Peregrine Falcon Project released a pair of peregrine falcons atop the Woodmen Tower, which was the tallest building in downtown Omaha at the time.

More on the Peregrine Falcon

What to look for: The Peregrine Falcon is a medium-sized raptor that is slightly smaller than an American Crow. Adults have a slate blue-gray back and wings, and whitish under-parts marked with black barring. The upper breast is clear, and may have a salmon-colored wash to it. A distinct feature of Peregrine Falcons is the dark malar stripe (or mustache) below the eyes. The peregrine falcon has a body length of 15-20 inches, a 40-inch wingspan and weighs one to two pounds.

What the name means: The scientific name, *Falco peregrinus*, comes from the Latin words *falco*, meaning "hook-shaped" which may refer to the bird's beak or claws, and *peregrinus*, meaning to wander. Peregrines are also called Duck Hawks, Great-footed Hawks and Wandering Falcons.

Where they are found: The Peregrine Falcon has one of the most far-reaching distributions of any bird of prey. Peregrines are found on every continent except Antarctica, and live in a wide variety of habitat, from tropics, deserts and maritime to the tundra, from sea level to 12,000 feet.

What they eat: Peregrines hunt most birds, including starlings, pigeons, blackbirds, jays, shorebirds, and waterfowl, but will rarely hunt mammals, reptiles or insects. Peregrines typically snag their prey in the air after a fast pursuit or dive.

How they reproduce: Peregrine Falcons lay between three and five eggs (one every other day), that are incubated for approximately 34 days. The young falcons fledge five to six weeks after hatching. Once they leave the nest, they are not welcome back home. They must find their own hunting ground.