

Gyrfalcon

Faucon gerfaut
Falco rusticolus

Nordic Species
(rare visitor to southern
Québec)



Wingspan: M : 101 cm to 124 cm / F : 120 cm to 135 cm



The Gyrfalcon is the largest falcon in Quebec. Its coloration varies largely from one individual to the next, but three main types of coloration are recognized; the white morph, the grey morph, and the dark morph. (The last coloration is not typically found in Quebec). The back and wings of the Gyrfalcon are lightly spotted and the whiskers (black lines under the eyes) are very thin or even absent. The pointed wings are typical of falcons.



The female is much larger than the male; up to 40% larger and heavier.



The Gyrfalcon nests in steep, mountainous or coastal regions in northern Quebec. In wintertime, we find it primarily in open terrain such as fields.



It feeds primarily on other birds, such as red grouse or ducks, and occasionally mammals.



The Gyrfalcon can live up to 30 years.



The nest is built on a ledge or cliff's edge, sheltered from snow. The Gyrfalcon returns every year to the same territory, but does not reuse the same nest twice. The female lays between 3 and 4 eggs.



The young males, being smaller, make their first flight around 45 to 47 days of age, this being 2 to 3 days soon than the females. The young remain dependant upon their parents 3 to 4 weeks after taking flight.



The Gyrfalcon is considered a rare species, but its population has been stable for about 25 years. The primary threats to the species are the increase in industrial exploitation in areas where it nests as well as increasing tourism to the rivers of the North. In addition, young Gyrfalcons are much sought after by poachers.



The Gyrfalcon is much sought after by falconers worldwide. The species is classified under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which imposes strict fines for the commerce, and illegal trafficking of these birds or their eggs. CITES is an agreement between different countries with the goal of monitoring the international trade of certain threatened species and plants. The convention is composed of three appendices. Appendix I contains the plant and animal species that are the most threatened.