

# Peregrine Falcon

Migratory Species

Faucon pèlerin  
*Falco peregrinus*



Wingspan : M : 94 cm to 100 cm / F : 102 cm to 116 cm



The Peregrine Falcon is probably the best known and most popular bird of prey worldwide. Its blue-slate coloured back and cream-coloured chest are characteristic of the species. Its large dark whiskers can also assist in its identification.



The female, at 46cm to 54cm, is larger than the male, at 38 to 46cm.



Rivaled only by the Osprey, the Peregrine Falcon's distribution is one of the most global among the birds of prey. This falcon is found on every continent except Antarctica, and lives in a wide variety of habitats from sea level to 12,000 feet including tropics, deserts, maritime and tundra. It lives mostly on cliff edges and other high spaces. We can even spot it in the heart of downtown Montreal with its nest built on the top of a skyscraper!



It feeds almost exclusively on birds such as pigeons, ducks and a variety of other species. The prey is caught mid-flight! A powerful grip with the talons is often enough to kill the prey upon capture. Small mammals and insects are occasionally added to the bird's diet.



The Peregrine Falcon can live 12 to 20 years.



This bird does not build a true nest, but deposits its eggs on the ground itself on the ledge of a cliff or man-made structure such as a skyscraper or bridge. Cliffs located near a body of water are ideal. The female lays 3 to 4 eggs.



The males take to flight around 39 to 46 days of age, which is sooner than the larger females who fly around 41 to 49 days of age. The young remain dependant upon their parents at least 30 days more after their first flight.



The population suffered a drastic decline in the 1960s following the industrial use of pesticides such as DDT. The accumulation of DDT in the falcon's body tissues leads to a thinning of their eggshells, which are then crushed by the weight of the incubating female. DDT use is prohibited in North America, but is still used in South America where the falcons migrate to in winter. Today, where DDT is used, it is done so in an attempt to reduce mosquito populations and thus the incidence of malaria. Nonetheless, with DDT being prohibited in North America and with the release of birds raised in captivity, the population seems to have rebounded.



The Peregrine falcon is among the fastest birds in the world. Its aerodynamic body allows it dive at an estimated speed of 300km/h.