

1994

## Peregrine Falcon

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### Recommended Citation

Byrd, M., D. Bradshaw, S. Padgett, B. Cross, and R. Lukei. 1994. Peregrine Falcon. CCBTR-94-08. Non-Game and Endangered Wildlife Program, Annual Report. Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration. Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. 4 pp.

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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME & INLAND FISHERIES  
PERFORMANCE REPORT (July 1, 1993 - June 30, 1994)

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PROJECT TITLE:	WILDLIFE CONSERVATION	PROJ. NO:	WE99R-3
STUDY TITLE:	RARE, THREATENED, & ENDANGERED BIRD CONSERVATION	STUDY NO:	IV
JOB TITLE:	PEREGRINE FALCON	JOB NO:	II
PERSONNEL:	MITCHELL BYRD, DANA BRADSHAW, SHAWN PADGETT, BOB CROSS, REESE LUKEI	COSTS:	
		Total:	\$31,700
		Federal:	\$23,775
		State:	\$7,925

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SUMMARY:

Sixteen pairs of peregrines were located in the state, two of which were in the mountains and the remainder on the Coastal Plain. Thirteen of these pairs were known to produce eggs. Nineteen young were produced, of which 14 were known to fledge. The fledging rate was 1.17 young per active nest and 1.75 productive nest. One pair renested but were unsuccessful the second time.

Several adult breeding falcons were trapped to identify their place of origin.

Four additional nest boxes were placed in urban environments where peregrines had been sighted.

A peregrine falcon banding and census station was operated during the fall migration.

OBJECTIVE A: To monitor potential nest sites on cliffs through the various mountain ranges in the state to locate active breeding pairs.

FINDINGS:

Cliff observations to locate nesting peregrine falcons were conducted by project personnel in Shenandoah National Park and in several sections of the George Washington National Forest. In addition, a temporary employee of the agency surveyed cliffs in southwestern Virginia. No volunteers submitted reports of activities by that group.

As a result of these collaborative efforts, the first documented nesting of peregrine falcons in the mountains of Virginia since 1962 was verified.

In late March, several sightings of one, and sometimes two, adult peregrines was made at Little Stony Mountain Cliffs in Shenandoah National Park by park personnel. Project personnel visited the site five times but failed to observe these birds. Further observations were not made by park personnel, hence it is believed that the birds abandoned the site early.

On July 22, 1994, park visitors reported a pair of falcons at Stony Man Mountain. Park personnel subsequently confirmed the presence of the pair and two young. Although young have not yet fledged, they are included in the calculations.

On April 5, 1994, park personnel observed a pair of adult peregrines at the summit of Old Rag Mountain in Shenandoah National Park. Subsequent observation by park personnel and project personnel resulted in the location of the ledge the birds were utilizing. Although eggs could not be seen from the observation point, behavior clearly indicated that the birds were incubating. On May 9, 1994, behaviour of the birds indicated abandonment of the site.

The nesting ledge was reached, and two abandoned eggs recovered. Evidence suggested that the ledge had been flooded during some heavy rains, probably resulting in damage to the eggs. Both eggs were collected for containment analysis.

This site can be easily modified with layers of fine gravel to eliminate this problem should the birds use this site in the future.

One other record from Big Schloss in Shenandoah County was reported, although project personnel were unable to confirm this sighting.

OBJECTIVE B: To locate and monitor nestings of peregrine falcons in the Coastal Plain of Virginia.

#### FINDINGS:

Observations were begun in early March to locate breeding pairs in Tidewater Virginia. All of the original hack towers were monitored by air and bridge sites and buildings in urban environments were monitored from land. In April and May, original hack sites also were monitored from the ground. These observations resulted in the location of 14 breeding pairs with production shown in Table 1.

Of the thirteen pairs which produced eggs, eight pairs produced a total of 19 young or 1.73 young per active nest and 2.38 per productive nest. Fledging rate was 1.17 young per active nest and 1.75 per productive nest. The Norfolk pair renested but apparently have failed a second time.

A second pair of peregrines was located in mid-July at an old shack on a marsh north of Wachapreague. It is unknown whether this pair produced eggs or young, hence this pair is excluded from all calculations.

Three pairs failed to produce eggs in 1994. The pairs at Metompkin and Parramore Islands were probably disturbed by great-horned owls as a single owl egg was found in a hack box at each of these towers. Both pairs of peregrines remained in the tower area. The pair at Cobb Island was completely displaced by great horned owls which raised a brood in the peregrine nesting box. A new pair of peregrines nested in the ceiling of the old shack on Elkins March, possibly the Cobb Island pair. These are the first verified records of horned owls disrupting pairs on the barrier islands.

All of the known young were banded, including the two at Stony Mountain.

Table 2. Origin of breeding peregrine falcons trapped or observed in 1993.

Site	Sex	Origin
Wallop's Island	M	No Data
Elkin's Marsh	M	(unbanded), banded 6-2-94
Elkin's Marsh	F	Great Fox Island 1990
Metompkin Island	M	Chincoteague NWR 1987
Norfolk	F	Great Fox Island 1988
Chincoteague NWR	M	Smith Island, MD 1987
Chincoteague NWR	F	Swan Bay, NJ 1990
James River Bridge	F	USFG Building, Baltimore MD 1989
James River Bridge	M	USFG Building, Baltimore MD 1991
Shenandoah NP-Old Rag Mtn.	F	Green band, probably hacked bird

OBJECTIVE C: To census migrant peregrines in the fall and to locate wintering birds.

FINDINGS:

Periodic surveys were conducted during the winter, particularly in urban areas and at bridges. Singles birds were found on the Rappahannock River Bridge, Benjamin Harrison Bridge, Elizabeth River Bridge, downtown Richmond, and in parts of Virginia Beach and Norfolk, and one in downtown Roanoke.

Nesting boxes were erected on a building in downtown Richmond, on the Benjamin Harrison Bridge on the James River, on a grain elevator in Norfolk, and on the Norris Bridge on the Rappahannock River.

OBJECTIVE D: To operate peregrine falcon banding stations on at Fisherman Island and Wise Point.

FINDINGS:

A peregrine falcon trapping station was operated at Wise Point on the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge from September 10 - November 16, 1993. Counts of migrant peregrines and results from the banding station are attached in a separate report.

In the course of banding young, attempts were made to trap resident adults using a mounted horned owl with a noose carpet on its head. In addition, bands were read on two birds on the James River Bridge. Origins of the birds on which information has been received is shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Peregrine falcon production in Virginia, 1994.

Location	Confirmed Pair	Active with Eggs	Young Produced	Young Fledged
1. Fisherman Island	yes	yes	3	3
2. Elkins Marsh	yes	yes	2	2
3. Metompkin Island	yes	no	0	
4. Wallop Island	yes	yes	0	
5. Chincoteague NWR	yes	yes	2	2
6. Parramore Island	yes	no	0	
7. Hog Island	yes	yes	2	2
8. Great Fox Island	yes	yes	0	
9. York River Bridge	yes	no	0	
10. Fort Eustis	yes	yes	2	2
11. Newport New (JR Bridge)	yes	yes	4	1
12. Rappahannock R. Bridge	yes	yes	0	
13. Norfolk	yes	yes	2	0
14. Old Rag Mountain	yes	yes	2	
15. Stony Man Mountain	yes	yes	2	2
16. Wachapreague	yes	yes	-	-
State Totals	16	13	19	14

Remarks

1. 3 young banded, one egg collected
2. 2 young banded
3. displaced by great-horned owl
4. 4 eggs collected
5. 2 young banded
6. displaced by great-horned owl
7. 3 young banded
8. one egg collected
9. female a subadult
10. 2 eggs
11. 4 young, 3 lost, one fostered to pair at Chincoteague
12. seen in incubating position, eggs not verified
13. 2 young produced and drowned; renested - no of young unknown, 2 eggs coll. from first clutch.
14. 1 egg collected
15. 2 young not fledged at current
16. discovered late, nesting history unknown