

1984

Peregrine Falcon Investigations

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PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: VIRGINIA PROJECT NO.: W-77-R-1
PROJECT TYPE: RESEARCH and/or INVENTORY STUDY NO.: IV
PROJECT TITLE: NON-GAME AND ENDANGERED SPECIES INVESTIGATIONS JOB NO.: IV-A, B, C, D
STUDY TITLE: PEREGRINE FALCON INVESTIGATIONS
PERIOD COVERED: July 1, 1983 - June 30, 1984

JOB IV-A OBJECTIVE: To obtain sightings of Peregrine Falcons in Virginia and determine where migrants are located.

JOB IV-B OBJECTIVE: To introduce Peregrine Falcons at hack sites on the barrier islands of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. There are historical records of tree nesting peregrines in Eastern Virginia. This program will be an attempt to restore peregrines to this portion of the former range.

JOB IV-C OBJECTIVE: To operate a peregrine falcon banding station at Fishermans Island N.W.R. during the fall migration period.

JOB IV-D OBJECTIVE: To relocate and visit all known historical peregrine eyries in order to evaluate their continued quality and to determine the presence of birds.

SUMMARY:

Fall and winter censuses of peregrines were conducted in Tidewater Virginia. Fall trapping sites were operated at Fishermans Island and Wise Point.

Two pairs of peregrines nested successfully, each pair producing two young. The brood of each pair was supplemented with two additional young from the breeding program at Cornell.

Hack sites were operated at Russell Island, Cobb Island, and Parramore Island. Six, five, and seven young, respectively, were placed at these sites. All eleven young from the Russell and Cobb Island sites have dispersed normally. The seven young at Parramore are still in the hack box at this time. With the exception of the seven young at Parramore, 101 young have been released since the inception of the hacking program. Ninety of these young have dispersed normally for a success rate of 89 per cent.

FALL MIGRATION:

Three stations to monitor raptor movements during the fall migration were operated at Fishermans Island, at Wise Point on the tip of the Eastern Shore Peninsula, and at Kiptopeke Beach. The stations were manned a total of 69 station days during September and October. A total of 87 peregrine falcons were seen at these stations during migration. Peregrine migration in the fall of 1983 was unusually heavy along the outer beaches as reported by falcon banders at these locations.

WINTERING RECORDS:

Peregrines were monitored regularly through the winter on the Eastern Shore and in Tidewater Virginia. Wintering peregrines continue to increase, probably as a result of the hacking program and as well as larger numbers of tundra birds.

Immature peregrines were seen regularly throughout the winter in the eastern part of the state. Adult peregrines were observed as casual visitors in a number of areas. Adults at the location of hack towers were seen as follows: Norfolk (3), Fishermans Island (2), Metomkin Island (1), Cobb Island (2), Wallops Island (1), Assateague Island (2), Russell Island (1), and Great Fox Island (2).

NESTING ATTEMPTS:

Single adults, both male and female, were observed on several occasions on the hack tower at Cobb Island during late winter and early spring. No breeding attempts were observed and these birds subsequently left the tower area. A pair of adult birds has regularly been seen on the north end of Cobb Island through the summer but this pair has shown no affinity for the hack tower. It is not known whether this pair is the same pair previously observed on the hack tower at the south end of the island.

The adult pair of birds at Fishermans Island began courtship early and went through all stages of courtship leading to egg-laying by the female. For the third consecutive year, the female failed to produce eggs. In an attempt to induce the female to incubate, artificial eggs were placed in the hack box. This attempt probably was made too late in the breeding cycle and failed. This pair still occupies the tower at the present time.

The pair of adults at Great Fox Island nested successfully and brought off 2 young. A third egg failed to hatch and was collected for analysis. Two additional young from the Peregrine Fund were introduced to this tower at four weeks of age to supplement the brood. All four young subsequently have fledged successfully.

The adult pair of peregrines at the Assateague tower were quite late with their breeding activities. In early May, artificial eggs were introduced to the tower to induce incubation. The female subsequently laid three eggs, two of which hatched. This brood will be supplemented with two additional young in July.

HACKING PROGRAM:

No new hacking towers were constructed during the year. Ten sites presently exist for either hacking or nesting at Parramore Island, Metomkin Island, Back Bay, Cobb Island, Fishermans Island, Wallops Island, Assateague Island, Great Fox Island, Russell Island, and Norfolk. Single or paired adults occurred at eight of these sites in 1984 of which two pair bred successfully.

Hack sites were used at Cobb and Russell Islands after adults there apparently dispersed. In addition, the new site at Parramore Island was used for hacking for the first time.

Six young were placed on the Russell Island tower and 5 on the Cobb Island tower. All 11 young dispersed successfully from these two sites. Seven young were placed at Parramore Island in early July. These young have not yet been released from the hack box.

With the exception of the seven young at Parramore 101 young have been released since the inception of the program. Ninety of these young have dispersed normally for a success rate of 89 per cent.

HISTORICAL EYRIES:

No work was done in the state on historical eyries. All eyries previously had been visited and characterized relative to physical characteristics and present suitability for reintroduction of peregrines. Several sites were visited in western North Carolina by project personnel in order to gain a perspective of these sites. It is believed that future mountain introductions might best be made in the areas where Virginia and North Carolina adjoin.

TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION:

STATUS OF PROGRESS:

SIGNIFICANT DEVIATIONS IN PROGRESS: None

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PERIOD COVERED:

COST THIS SEGMENT: Federal \$22,443.00 : State \$7,481.00 : Total \$29,924.00

JOB VI-A

PREPARED BY:

Mitchell A. Byrd
W. H. Taylor

APPROVED BY:

Jack W. Raybourne
Chief, Division of Game

JOB VI-B

OBJECTIVE:

JOB VI-C

OBJECTIVE:

R. H. Cross, Jr.

Executive Director

DATE: August 1, 1983

SUMMARY:

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