

1979

Peregrine Falcon Investigations

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The Center for Conservation Biology

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Recommended Citation

Byrd, M. A. 1979. Peregrine Falcon Investigations. CCBTR-79-00. Non-Game and Endangered Wildlife Program, Annual Report. Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration. Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. 3 pp.

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PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: Virginia PROJECT NUMBER: E-3
PROJECT TYPE: Research and/or Inventory STUDY NUMBER: VI
PROJECT TITLE: Endangered Species Investigations JOB NUMBER: VI-F1 & VI-F2
PERIOD COVERED: July 1, 1978 to June 30, 1979

JOB VI-F1 OBJECTIVE: To obtain sightings of Peregrine Falcons in Virginia and determine where migrants are located.
JOB VI-F2 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.

SUMMARY:

Counts were made of all raptors passing Fisherman's Island for a 22 day period in September and October. A total of 11,315 raptors was counted, of which 33 were peregrines. A hacking station was established on Cobb Island from which five peregrines, 2 males and three females were successfully fledged. A raptor trapping and banding station was established on Fisherman's Island where 350 raptors, including four peregrines, were captured. Nest boxes were established on an urban site where a female peregrine has wintered for three consecutive years. Tail mounted transmitters were placed on three of the birds hacked in 1979 in an effort to determine if these birds stay on the barrier island.

Fall Migration:

A station to monitor raptor movements during the fall migration was established on Fisherman's Island at the south end of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. This station was manned all day on a total of 22 days during September and October. A total of 11,315 raptors was counted, of which 33 were peregrine falcons. Of these falcons, only three were positively identified as adult birds.

Winter Records:

Ten, one day trips, were made during the winter and early spring to the Virginia barrier islands and other coastal areas to locate wintering falcons. As a result of these trips, 12 wintering birds were located. Three of these birds appeared to be adults and the remainder appeared to be juveniles.

Two birds, an adult and juvenile, again wintered at the Army Corps of Engineers Craney Island Spoil Disposal Site in Hampton Roads. One of these birds bore a colored band which was read. This bird proved to be a bird released at the Mt. Tom, Massachusetts, hack site the previous summer.

A single bird occupied a bank building in Norfolk as a winter roost. This bird, identifiable by an unusual plumage character, has occupied this site for three consecutive winters. The bird appears to be a female.

In view of the reported presence of a male peregrine near this bank site, two prepared nest boxes were placed on the building. Although the female remained at the site until early May, there was no evidence of any use of the boxes.

Hacking Station

In 1978, a peregrine hacking station was established on the cupola of the abandoned Coast Guard Station on Cobb Island on the Virginia Eastern Shore. Five, six-week-old peregrines from the Cornell Peregrine Fund program were introduced to the hacking station on June 20, 1978. Three of these birds fledged and two were lost to severe thunderstorms.

In 1979, a peregrine hacking tower was constructed approximately 300 yards from the Coast Guard tower utilized in 1978.

Five, four week old peregrines were placed in the hack box on June 11, 1979. All five birds successfully fledged.

Of considerable interest was the appearance at the hack tower of a tiercel from the 1978 hacking operation. This young male spent 3-4 weeks at the tower during the end of the hacking period and was frequently observed flying with one of the females introduced this year.

Trapping Program

A peregrine trapping station was established on Fisherman's Island and operated for 20 trapping days in September and October.

Approximately 350 raptors were captured, banded, and measurements taken. Included in this total were four peregrines, all juveniles. One of the peregrines captured in Mid-October was a tiercel from the hack station at Cobb Island. This individual was captured 2 1/2 months after dispersal and at a point approximately 15 miles from the hack site. In view of this capture, an attempt was made in 1979 to mark three hacked peregrines in a way which would make it possible to monitor their movements in the immediate post dispersal period. Three birds, two tiercels and one falcon were fitted with tail mounted radio transmitters. This phase of the study is currently in progress.

TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION:

June 30, 1981

STATUS OF PROGRESS:

On Schedule

SIGNIFICANT DEVIATIONS IN PROGRESS:

None

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Continue with Remaining Project Plans

COST THIS SEGMENT:

FEDERAL:

- STATE:

TOTAL:

PREPARED BY: Mitchell A. Byrd

APPROVED BY: Jack W. Raybourne
Chief, Division of Game

DATE: August 1, 1979

James F. McInteer, Jr.
Executive Director