

1978

Peregrine Falcon Investigations

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The Center for Conservation Biology

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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, 1977 to June 30, 1978

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:

A review of the literature for historical records was completed. Counts of all raptors were made for 18 full days in September and October at Wise Point on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. A total of 10,646 raptors were counted of which 16 were peregrines. These consisted of six adults, six immatures, and six of unknown age. An estimated 10 wintering birds were located, all in Tidewater Virginia. Five peregrines were placed on a hacking station which was established on Cobb Island. At the time of this report, the birds were flying, but had not yet departed the site.

LITERATURE AND HISTORICAL RECORDS:

A review of the literature was continued as was the compilation of historical information on the peregrine in Virginia. Data were tabulated on transients, wintering birds, and the location of former breeding sites.

FALL MIGRATION:

A station to monitor raptor movements during the fall migration was established at Wise Point on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. This station was manned all day on a total of eighteen days during September and October. A total of 10,646 raptors were counted, of which 16 were peregrine falcons. These consisted of six adults, six immature, and 6 of unknown age. Two birds were observed bearing radio devices.

WINTER RECORDS:

Fourteen 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 visits, 10 wintering birds were located. Two of these birds appeared to be adults and the remainder appeared to be juveniles.

WINTER RECORDS: (cont.)

Two birds appeared to use a bank building in Norfolk as a winter roost. There was no evidence of the pair of birds reported in 1977 as occupying the abandoned Coast Guard tower on Hog Island in April.

HACKING STATION:

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 University breeding program were introduced to the hacking station on June 20, 1978. Three females and two males were used at the site. One male and one female subsequently have been lost during severe thunderstorm activity.

At the time this report was prepared, the remaining three birds were flying strongly and had begun to make extended daily forays away from the hacking site. At least one individual had been observed carrying a prey item. It is anticipated that all birds will depart the hacking site by August 15, 1978.

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: R. H. Cross, Jr.
Chief, Division of Game

DATE: July 15, 1978

Chester F. Phelps
Executive Director

PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: Virginia

PROJECT NUMBER: W-40-R-24

PROJECT TYPE: Research and Survey

STUDY NUMBER : VI

JOB NUMBER : VI-F

PROJECT TITLE: Endangered Species Investigations

PERIOD COVERED: July 1, 1976 to June 30, 1977

STUDY TITLE: Peregrine Falcon Study

STUDY OBJECTIVES: To compile all historical information on this species in Virginia.

To compile current records on the species as a transient and wintering bird in the state.

To make management recommendations for the species in the state.

SUMMARY:

A review of the literature was begun for historical records. Groups were contacted to report observation of the species to the Project Leader. Observations were made of a number of wintering birds along the coast.

HISTORICAL RECORDS:

A review of the literature was begun to compile historical information on the peregrine falcon in Virginia. Data are being tabulated on transients, wintering birds, and the location of former breeding sites. Records of the hawk migration groups also are being reviewed for this purpose.

CURRENT RECORDS:

Local ornithological and other groups have been requested to report all sightings to the Project Leader.

In addition, eleven trips were made during the winter and early spring to the Virginia barrier islands and other coastal areas for location of wintering falcons. As a result of these visits, six different wintering falcons were located. These consisted of 3 adults and 3 juveniles.

Three of these observations were of particular interest. One adult bird at the Craney Island Disposal site in Portsmouth was approached closely enough on two occasions to observe a Fish and Wildlife Service butt-end aluminum band on the left leg. Arrangements were made to attempt to trap this bird to identify its place of origin. Severely inclement weather prevented this plan from being carried out before the bird departed the area.

A second bird, possibly the Craney Island individual, roosted on the logo of a bank building in Norfolk for several weeks in April. It was reported that

a pair was nesting there but the presence of two individuals nor any nesting attempts could be verified.

A third observation was the presence of a very aggressive pair of falcons in the abandoned Coast Guard Tower on Hog Island, one of the Virginia Barrier Islands. This pair of birds apparently occupied the tower for some while in April and exhibited very aggressive behavior. The birds subsequently abandoned the tower, perhaps because of the presence of a nearby nesting pair of ospreys. A number of these barrier islands currently are owned by the Nature Conservancy and have abandoned towers located on them. They would appear to be ideal sites for the introduction of captivity reared falcons.

Emphasis will be placed on fall and winter observations along the coast in 1977-1978.

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: \$1110 STATE: \$1390 TOTAL: \$2500

PREPARED BY: Mitchell A. Byrd

APPROVED BY: R. H. Cross, Jr.
Chief, Division of Game

DATE: June, 1977

Chester F. Phelps
Executive Director