

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus anatum

STATUS

Special Concern 

Vulnerable 

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Species Description

The Peregrine Falcon is a medium-sized raptor (36-49 cm), with long pointed wings (100 cm wingspan). It has a blackish "moustache" (stripe below the eye) and a blue-grey back. The breast is whitish with brown bars on the abdomen and thighs. The underside of the wings are white with black bars. Immature peregrines are darker with a brown back.



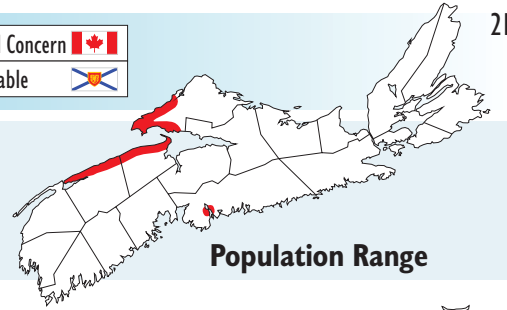
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Approximately fifteen pairs nest along the coast in the Bay of Fundy. Winter in Central and South America.



Population Range

Habitat

Found in an array of open habitats such as wetlands, sea coasts, and meadows. They are typically associated with coastal habitats with an abundance of bird prey. In Nova Scotia they are found along steep cliff ledges in the Bay of Fundy and in urban landscapes such as the tall buildings of downtown Halifax and Dartmouth.

Peregrine Falcons are often observed in the summer soaring along shorelines near the Bay of Fundy (look in August at Evangeline beach). They are rarely observed during the winter.

Interesting Points

- They are the fastest animal on the planet and have been clocked at speeds over 300 km/hr.
- They are excellent hunters that feed almost entirely on birds, usually catching them in mid-air!
- Following a 40 year absence, the first breeding pair returned to this province in 1995 (thanks to the efforts of a reintroduction program initiated in the 1980s).
- In 2000, approximately 500 pairs nested in Canada thanks to releases of captive-bred peregrines.

Similar Species

Merlin:

Smaller (24-30 cm); light facial markings; heavily streaked breast and belly.



Gyrfaalcon:

Larger (48-64 cm); broader wings; longer tail; less distinct facial features. Does not nest here, but visits in the winter.



Threats to Survival

- Populations across North America almost disappeared because of pesticide use (especially DDT).
- DDT was banned in the 1970s but high levels of this and other pesticides are still found in peregrine tissue.
- Human disturbance.
- Illegal harvest for falconry.



How You Can Help

Learn about this species and report sightings or suspected nest sites. Avoid disturbing birds at known nesting locations. They are beautiful but need space.



Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: NS DNR (902) 679-6091

Info: www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca, Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas: www.mba-aom.ca

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings, eBird.org