

AMERICAN PEREGRINE FALCON
(*Falco peregrinus anatum*)

STATUS: Recovered (64 FR 46542, August 25, 1999).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: A reclusive, crow-sized falcon with slate blue-gray on the back and wings, and white on the underside; a black head with vertical “bandit’s mask” pattern over the eyes; long pointed wings; and a long wailing call made during breeding. Very adept flyers and hunters, reaching diving speeds of 320 kph (200 mph).

HABITAT: Areas with rocky, steep cliffs, primarily near water, where prey (primarily shorebirds, songbirds, and waterfowl) concentrations are high. Nests are found on ledges of cliffs, and sometimes on man-made structures such as office towers and bridge abutments. In Arizona, it may be found between 1,072 to 2,745 m (3,500 to 9,000 ft) in elevation.

RANGE: Current: Breeding range is from Canada and Alaska south into Baja California, the central Mexican highlands, and northwest Mexico, including the continental U.S. (except the southeast corner of the country). Most birds probably winter in Mexico and Central and South America.

Potential: Most breeding populations are confined to the mountainous areas of the western U.S. and Canada. In Arizona, there are over 200 known eyries. Breeding pairs are well distributed throughout suitable habitat statewide, except the low elevation deserts of the southwest quarter where only one nesting territory is currently known. Breeding pairs appear to be year-round residents. The birds also occur throughout the state as migrants, transients, and wintering individuals.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: The primary cause was reproductive failure due to organochloride pesticide use (especially DDT use in U.S. prior to the 1980s and continuing today in countries south of the U.S.). Other causes were human-induced mortality from disturbances of nests, shooting, egg collection, nest destruction, and breeding interference.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:

NOTES: Populations of peregrine falcons are now estimated at 1,650 breeding birds in the U.S. and Canada, with additional birds in Mexico. In August 1999, the Fish and Wildlife Service removed the American peregrine falcon from the list of endangered and threatened species, marking one of the most dramatic successes of the Endangered Species Act.