



FIGURE 1. A nest of the Red Warbler (*Ergaticus ruber*). Overhanging leaves of grass, which covered the nest, have been brushed aside in order to take the photograph. Three young are in the nest. Note the oak leaf at the entrance.

the nest was easy to find. Whenever the nestlings saw an adult approaching with food, they uttered a high, rapid peeping sound. This betrayed their presence and enabled me to locate them.

PEREGRINE FALCON SIGHTINGS IN EASTERN PERU

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The Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is among the most cosmopolitan of land birds, but there are no records for it east of the Andes in Peru. I report here several sightings of peregrines in the Chanchomayo Valley, Department of Junin, Peru. On 5 August 1972, Peter Alden and I saw a large falcon, all pale below, sailing along a cliff face at a point about 15 km by road above the city of San Ramon. The elevation of the valley floor was 1,370 m. The following day we again saw a falcon, presumably the same one, perched on a tree on the cliff top, about 400 m above us. Through a 40 \times telescope we saw the black subocular mark, the nearly circular whitish auricular area, the whitish underparts with only a trace of barring, and the bluish-gray wings and mantle merging into a darker crown. These features are adequate to distinguish the Peregrine from: the Pallid Falcon (*F. kreyenborgi*, only five specimens known) which has a pale buffy crown and nape and less distinct subocular mark, the Orange-breasted Falcon (*F. deiroleucus*) which has brown and black underparts, and from the Aplomado Falcon (*F. femoralis*) which has a conspicuous dark breast band. On 11 and 13 September 1972, Stuart Keith and I observed two adult peregrines flying and sitting in trees atop the same cliff. One bird was gray-backed but the other could not be seen clearly enough to determine whether there were two males or a male and female present.

I found a single oak leaf at the entrance of the nest (Fig. 1). I searched the area surrounding the nest in a radius of several feet for other leaves but found none. Because the oak leaf was the only one of its kind in the area, and because it was right at the nest entrance, it may have been placed there by the Red Warblers. Perhaps the leaf served as a clue to help the adults find the nest more quickly as they flew into the clump of grass which hid it from view.

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We could not detect size differences or displays suggestive of a nesting pair. On 6 August 1972, near the town of La Merced, about 30 km by road downriver from the cliff locality, an adult male peregrine, also with distinct subocular mark, pale blue-gray back, and whitish underparts, flew past me.

Two races of the Peregrine Falcon are likely to reach Peru. The South American *F. p. cassini* breeds from Tierra del Fuego north to Atacama, Chile and Tucuman, Argentina, and probably migrates to northern South America. The recently described race *F. p. tundrius* (White 1968) of the American high Arctic has been identified from Surinam (Haverschmidt 1972) and is the one most likely recorded elsewhere in South America (e.g. Sick 1960) although older records were assigned to the relatively non-migratory *F. p. anatum*. The Pallid Falcon, either a species or a race or color morph of peregrine (Brown and Amadon 1968) is presumed to breed on the southern tip of South America and to wander north to central Patagonia. In Peru, Koepecke (1970) reported that *anatum* (= *tundrius*) occurs along the coast in the northern winter, although a specimen collected by Kalinowski on 4 March 1890 was identified as *cassini* (von Berlepsch & Stolzmann 1892). Morrison (1939) saw two peregrines at Yauli, Dept. of Huancaavelica (alt. 3,300 m) on 10 September 1937 and assumed they were *cassini*. Chapman (1926) noted that peregrines occurred in Ecuador "throughout the year" based on specimens from February, May and July; at least one was identified as *anatum* rather than *cassini*.

The observations reported here, apparently the first for eastern Peru, are of unusual interest because

the August date argues (albeit not strongly) against these adult birds being migrants from the Arctic. The continued occupancy of a cliff top for at least five weeks raises the possibility of breeding. However, Sick (pers. comm.) informed me that peregrines wintering near Rio de Janeiro may frequent one location for weeks at a time. Considering the height of the cliff it is no surprise that such birds would have escaped detection by collectors in the valley, for even identification would have been difficult without a telescope.

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RECENT NESTINGS OF THE MERLIN IN IDAHO

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The Merlin (or Pigeon Hawk, *Falco columbarius*) has been recorded as a nesting species in Idaho three times (Stanley A. Temple, pers. comm.). All three records, based on museum specimens, were prior to 1913 and occurred in southeastern Idaho. Although the Merlin has not been recognized as a breeding bird in Idaho by recent publications (Burleigh, Birds of Idaho, Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1971; Larrison et al., J. Idaho Acad. of Sci. 5:95, 1967), nesting has been assumed by some ornithologists. This paper describes two recent nestings of the Merlin in Idaho.

On 1 June 1973, Renn saw an adult male Merlin catch a female Redwinged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) in a small marsh on the western edge of the Snake River Plain in Blaine Co., Idaho. The Merlin flew from the marsh to a nearby slope where a female Merlin joined him and he passed the prey item to her in the air. The birds then flew to a grove of juniper trees (*Juniperus osteosperma*) on a hillside covered by sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.). Below this hillside, in a small group of aspen trees (*Populus tremuloides*), Renn found a nest of the Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*) that contained four Merlin eggs. The eggs were red-brown with dark blotches. Both adult Merlins vigorously defended this nest by calling and diving at Renn. The nest is near a spring at an elevation of 1,448 m in a cool desert (Odum, Fundamentals of ecology. W. B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia, 1971). At the nearest weather station the average temperature during the

nesting season is 12°C and the average annual precipitation is 25.4 cm (Natl. Weather Serv., Pocatello Municipal Airport, Pocatello, Idaho).

On 18 April 1975, Craig entered a narrow canyon on the northern edge of the Snake River Plain in Butte Co., Idaho. Within the canyon, where the vegetation was characterized by sagebrush and juniper trees, an adult male and a female Merlin behaved defensively by diving at Craig and calling. We visited the area again on 5 June and flushed a female Merlin from a large magpie nest in a juniper tree. The nest contained five Merlin eggs. The canopy of the nest was intact and no modification of the interior was evident. All five eggs hatched around 20 June; one young Merlin died within the first week, one disappeared at 17 days of age and three fledged about 17 July. On seven of nine visits to the nest, prey remains were found; they included 18 Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*), three Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*), and two Western Meadowlarks (*Sturnella neglecta*). The nest is at an elevation of 1,890 m and the nearest water is 10 km from the canyon. The average annual precipitation of the area is 20.9 cm at 1,646 m and the average temperature during the nesting season is 13°C (Yanskey, G. R., E. H. Markee, Jr., and A. P. Ritcher. Climatology of the National Reactor Testing Station. IDO-12048. Idaho Operations Off. [A.E.C.], 1966). The area is a cool desert.

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