

## THE PEREGRINE FALCON IN THE PERRY RIVER AREA, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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In the summer of 1965 at least three pairs of Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) nested along the Perry River within 20 miles of Chester Bay, Arctic Ocean (67° 44' N., 102° 14' W.)—one pair nested on a west-facing cliff one-half mile south of Rainy Island; a second on an east-facing rounded cliff near the south end of Lee Island; and a third on a north-facing cliff about 18 miles inland near Laine Creek. A fourth nest was found 30 miles east of the Perry River near the Ekalukpik River (67° 33' N., 101° 28' W.), a name given this river by the local Eskimos.

Peregrines were not recorded by Gavin (1947) who spent from 1938 to 1941 as manager of the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Perry River. Hanson, Queneau and Scott (1956) observed it on five occasions between June 6 and 21 while carrying out an intensive ornithological survey in the area in 1949. They found two pairs nesting in the immediate Perry River area; one about six miles from the coast and a second on a cliff near the south end of Lee Island. This latter eyrie location corresponds to that of nest number two mentioned above. J. P. Ryder and R. H. Kerbes (*pers. comm.*) have informed me that this same eyrie was active in 1964 and contained two young about the middle of July. Aleksuik (1964) observed Peregrines on two occasions and heard another at the "cliffs along the Perry River" in early August, 1963. Macpherson and Manning (1959) found it to be quite abundant on Adelaide Peninsula, about 100 miles east of Perry River. Fraser (1957) reported that "next to the Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) this was the most common bird of prey on Boothia (Isthmus)." He also found it to be scarce on southeastern Victoria Island and attributed this to the scarcity of suitable nesting cliffs. Mc Ewen (1957) reported it to be "fairly common" at Bathurst Inlet about 100 miles west. In the Perry River region in 1965, it was the third most common raptor, after the Rough-legged Hawk and Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*).

The first nest, found on July 24, 1965, about one-quarter mile east of the Perry River, contained two young approximately one week old and two addled eggs. It was situated on a rugged cliff about 20 feet above the rocks. On July 31 the two young were banded. Nest number two, near the south end of Lee Island, was checked on July 14, but was inaccessible at that time. It was reached on July 31 with the aid of ropes and found to contain one young and one egg containing a dead embryo. The nestling, with flight feathers and rectrices fairly well developed, was banded. No food remains were found at these two eyries.

The third nest near Laine Creek was found on July 27 and two young were banded. Remains of Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius*

*lapponicus*) and Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) were present in the nest. The fourth nest containing two nearly fledged young and one egg, was found on August 3 near the Ekalukpik River. Although the nest was inaccessible, it could be seen from above. The wing of a Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) and Snow Bunting remains were found below the eyrie. No mammal remains were present in any of the nests.

The average clutch size for four Peregrine nests in the Perry River region in 1965 was 2.8 eggs and the overall hatching success was 63.6 percent. Fledging success data were not obtained as we left the area before the young had left their nests. The Peregrine nests were usually more inaccessible than the 19 Rough-legged Hawk nests examined. Three of the Peregrine nests examined (numbers 2, 3 and 4) consisted of a "three-sided" structure on a cliff ledge composed of willow branches and leaves with the fourth side being the cliff wall. The nests were lined with grasses and sedges which become matted into the willow as the young grow older. The eggs in nest number one were laid on the bare cliff ledge where enough earth was present to prevent the eggs from rolling.

Some interspecific relationships between the Peregrine and other species were observed. On August 4 one was seen stooping on a Pintail (*Anas acuta*) but was unsuccessful in taking the duck. One was observed being chased by a pair of Long-tailed Jaegers (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) near the Gavin River on August 12. Nest number two was situated within 300 yards of a Rough-legged Hawk nest and 15 feet of a Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) nest on the same outcropping along the Perry River (Sealy, 1965).

The information presented in this paper was obtained during the period July 8 to August 12, 1965, when the writer was assisting J. P. Ryder in Canadian Wildlife Service studies of Ross's geese (*Anser rossii*) in the Perry River region. I should like to thank J. D. Chapman, then manager of the Perry Island Hudson's Bay Company's post, and David Amghiak, a Kogmiut Eskimo, for their assistance in reaching the eyrie on Lee Island.

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## GENERAL NOTES

**Observations on the behavior of Black and Turkey Vultures at traps and in captivity.**—As part of an immunological study using live vultures, the authors trapped, handled and maintained in captivity many dozens of specimens of the Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) and Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), which provided opportunities to observe their behavior at traps and under constraint. These studies were made both in north Florida and in the Panama Canal Zone, with no differences of behavior noted in the two areas.

Several trapping methods were employed with varying results. Steel traps with padded jaws distributed about a bait were moderately successful for catching small numbers of birds, with little or no apparent harm to the vultures. Drugging bait with alpha-chloralose (carried out in cooperation with the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission) was tried, but this too often resulted in birds' taking fatal overdoses in the course of gorging themselves. A more sophisticated method of distributing drugs about a carcass should prove to be the most convenient and efficient manner to trap vultures if perfected. A cannon net was used with success on one occasion.

In Panama, fairly consistent success in trapping vultures was obtained by use of walk-in traps made simply by bending a 30-foot length of 1" x 2" mesh, 4' tall welded wire upon itself so that it formed two chambers (preferably of unequal size), with an opening between them large enough to permit the entrance of the birds; the top of the trap was covered with more wire mesh or cargo netting. Bait (perhaps a roadside-killed sloth or anteater) was placed in the larger chamber. Birds entering through the opening usually had considerable difficulty in finding their way out again, so that the traps needed to be attended only once or twice a day.

Both Black and Turkey Vultures were surprisingly wary of all the trapping devices we used, even the unobtrusive cannon net. At times, several days elapsed before the birds would enter a set. In Panama, most trapping was done at garbage dumps where Black Vultures congregate by the hundreds. We never observed Turkey Vultures with the Blacks at the dumps. Turkey Vultures were trapped in small numbers in more forested situations along the edge of roads.

When a walk-in trap was first placed at the Pedro Miguel (C. Z.) dump, it was soon surrounded by inquisitive Black Vultures which, nevertheless, did not enter it until the second day when at least 50 birds were taken at one time in the small enclosure. While birds were being removed by us at the opening, Blacks outside the cage but opposite us were greedily poking their heads through the wire mesh in an attempt to reach the bait. Such enthusiasm for the trap and bait soon waned as the trapping project continued. Of about 200 vultures banded and released at the dump, only three were recaptured in the trap, and these nearly six months after banding. Toward the end of our activities at Pedro Miguel, the vultures became so wary that they would fly away from the area when the green car we drove appeared at the dump. A short while later, the dump was practically abandoned by the vultures, perhaps in response to our continued presence. (They are quite fearless in the presence of the garbage men and dump attendants, who never molest them.)

The same trap was placed on the roof of the public market on the Panama City waterfront, where Black Vultures gather in great numbers. Meatscraps were thrown in and around the trap; and when we backed away the vultures swarmed in, consuming all the scraps outside the trap almost instantly without a