

Summary

The decline of the Peregrine Falcon in the Okanagan Valley region of the southern interior of B. C. has followed two general stages. During the first thirty years of the twentieth century the relatively common Peregrine slowly became rarer, and the once relatively rare Prairie Falcon increased in abundance. Some Peregrines survived into the 1950's in the Valley, and some possibly still breed in remoter parts of the study area. A complex of factors is suggested as having some effect on the Peregrine decline--the factors of major significance are suspected to be climatic changes, and secondarily, specimen and egg collecting.

The second phase of the decline of these falcons seems to have begun in the early 1950's. It was during that decade and the present one that the few remaining Peregrine eyries as well as the relatively numerous Prairies' eyries suddenly became vacated. At present, this writer is unaware of any eyries used by these two species in the Okanagan in 1966. The factor responsible for this recent decline is almost certainly biocide contamination.

Two recommendations are presented: the Peregrine and Prairie Falcons should be given complete protection in the B. C. southern interior; careful and detailed investigations should be attempted in areas slightly to the north of the present study area in efforts to determine exactly what factors are causing the declines when the declines occur in these more removed areas.

It may be of importance also to note that the problems seen in these two falcon species are by no means confined to them alone. In the Okanagan, the Osprey and Bald Eagle were frequently seen birds earlier in this century. The Swainson's Hawk has apparently been reduced considerably in numbers in the last forty years. And the Burrowing Owl and the Sage Thrasher are close to extinction, if not extinct already, in the Okanagan.

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Birds of Prey in the Collection of the
American Museum of Natural History

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The study collection of birds in The American Museum of Natural History, New York, numbers about one million specimens. Raptores are proportionately represented. The vast material gathered in South America under the supervision of F. M. Chapman, the wonderful collections from the East Indies amassed by Lord Rothschild, and the splendid African specimens obtained by the late James P. Chapin and others, are among the more important components of the New York collection. After purchase of the Rothschild Collection in the 30's our species representation of the Falconiformes and Strigiformes was perhaps 90 per cent complete. Then, over the past 10 years, we have made a special effort to acquire missing species of birds in general and raptores in particular. As a result of generous exchanges from other museums we now lack only one species in the entire order Falconiformes, and this a dubious one, namely Falco kryenborgi (see Streseman and Amadon, Ibis, 1963, 105, pp. 400-402). Of the elusive owls we are not quite so well off, lacking six species; namely, Otus ireneae Ripley, recently described from East Africa; Otus beccarii of Biak Island, Papua; Mimizuku gurnevi of the Philippines; Bubo shelleyi of West Africa (of which we are promised, on its demise, an individual now in the New York Zoo); Scotopelia ussheri of West Africa, and Phodilus prigoginei, the African Bay Owl, still known from but one specimen.

This does not, of course, mean that some of the forms in our collection are adequately represented. Of Accipiter collaris, for example, we have only one, an immature; the Field Museum in Chicago, with its rich neotropical collections, happen to have 6 or 8 specimens of this bird.