

Species Sheets: Peregrine Falcon



photo by Kate Davis ©

Common name: Peregrine Falcon

Latin Name: *Falco peregrinus*

Field Marks: Length 16-20 inches
Wing span 36-44 inches



Among the most famous raptors with 19 subspecies across the world and 3 in North America. Cosmopolitan. Sexes alike in plumage. Large, stocky falcon with dark hood and mustache, or “malar” stripe. Bluish black above with spotted light underparts with rufous hue. Juvenals are browner. Skin around eye (eye-ring) and at base of beak (cere) changes from blue to yellow after one year. Used to be called Duck Hawk.

Habitat:

Open country, cliffs, and recently even large cities, where they nest on window ledges and feed on pigeons. One of most widely distributed birds in world.

Behavior:

Primarily feeds on birds. Peregrines are one of the fastest flying of birds, with “stoops” or dives at prey at over 200 miles per hour. Prey are hit in the air and knocked to the ground with falcon’s closed feet, or may plucked from the air in high-speed chase.

Nest and eggs:

Cliff nesters with only a “scrape” or bare area

needed to lay the typically 3 or 4 eggs. Also skyscraper ledges and bridges. Young hatch at 32-35 days and learn to hunt with parents.

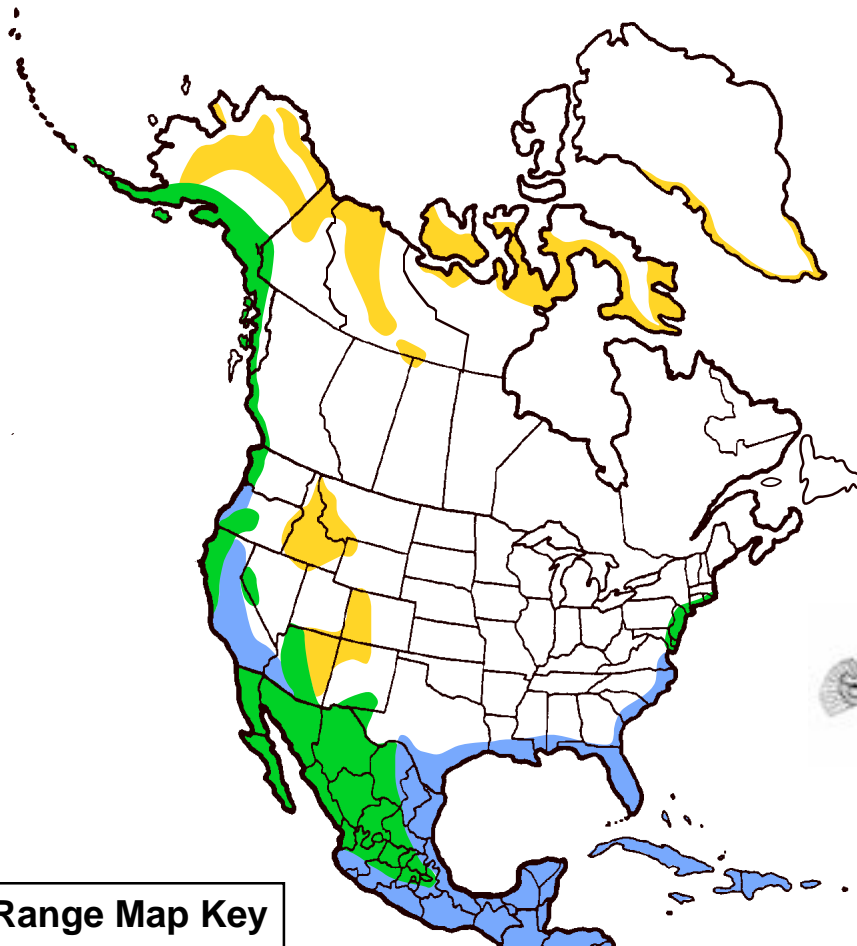
Movement:

Name *peregrinus* means “wanderer,” referring to this falcon’s long-distance migrations. Subspecies from Canada (*Falco peregrinus tundrius*) the most migratory. Our continental subspecies, *Falco peregrinus anatum*, migrates into South America in the winter.

Interesting Fact:

Seriously endangered after the widespread use of DDT in the 1940’s until 1972. This pesticide was used to control insect pests on crops, and caused eggshell thinning so that reproduction failed. Species was extinct east of the Great Plains. Over 6,000 Peregrines bred in captivity have been reintroduced to the wild by Peregrine Fund. Gradually the original numbers have been restored. Continental subspecies removed from Endangered Species List in August, 1999.

Range Map: Peregrine Falcon



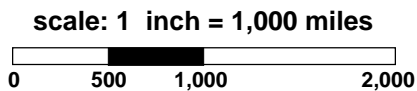
Peregrine Falcon. Copyright © Kate Davis



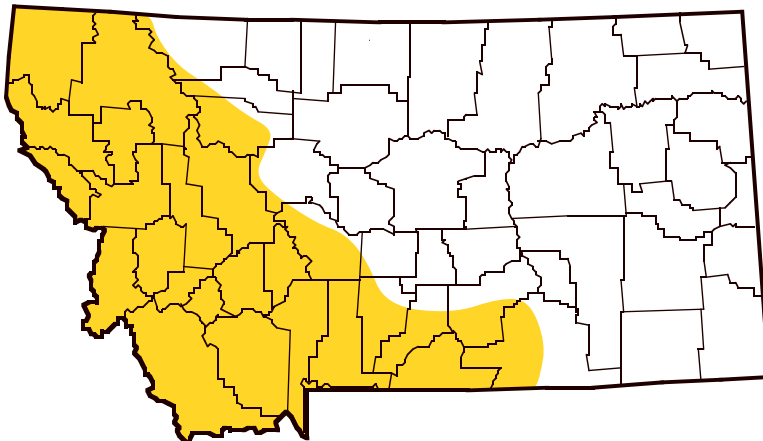
These maps are designed to show the general limits of occurrence. Within those limits, each species will likely be found only in appropriate habitat.

Range Map Key

- Summer
- Year-round
- Winter



Raptor Range in Montana



Montana range maps are based on the Montana Bird Distribution data.