

Everything you need to know about

# PEREGRINE FALCONS



## A need for speed

- Peregrines are the fastest-flying birds on earth.
- A peregrine's hunting dive, called a stoop, averages 150 to 200 mph.
  - The highest recorded diving speed is 242 mph.
  - They average 25 to 34 mph in traveling flight.

## A bird well-traveled

- Peregrine is Latin for wanderer.
- Peregrines breed in about 40 states and are found on every continent except Antarctica.
- They have one of the longest migrations of any North American bird.
- Some travel up to 15,500 miles a year.
- They inhabit mountain ranges, river valleys, coastlines, wetlands, open areas and cities.

## Small but powerful

- Adult peregrines are the size of a crow.
- Their average wingspan is 15 to 21 inches.
- Females are typically 1/3 larger than males.
- Peregrines eat other birds, such as songbirds, ducks, bats, and pigeons.
- They can kill birds as large as Sandhill Cranes and as small as hummingbirds.
- Peregrines' natural predators include eagles, gyrfalcons, and great horned owls.

## Super bird

- Peregrines' third eyelid, the nictitating membrane, protects their eyes while diving.
- The distinct dark malar stripe beneath their eyes reduces the sun's glare.
- A bony, cone-shaped structure called a tubercle allows them to breathe normally when flying at high speeds.
- They use a tomial tooth, a sharp notch on the upper beak, to quickly snap the vertebrae of their prey.



## Early development

- The average clutch is three to four eggs.
- Eggs range from a light cream to a reddish brown color.
- The average egg is 2 inches long by 1.6 to 1.9 inches wide.
- Incubation is 29 to 32 days.
- Chicks, called eyases, start to fly at about 6 weeks of age.
- When born, they weigh about 1.5 ounces.
- At three weeks, chicks are 10 times their size at birth.



## Lifelong partners

- Peregrines mate for life.
- The male courts the female for about a month by performing aerial and acrobatic displays.
- They breed in the same territory every year.
- The parents incubate the eggs and raise the chicks together.

## Great heights

- Peregrines nest at elevations of up to 12,000 feet.
- In urban areas, they use the ledges of tall buildings, bridges and other structures for nesting.
- The male initially selects potential nest sites while the female chooses the final site.
- They do not build nests but rather make a "scrape," or shallow depression, at the site.



## King and Sherco Plant Falcons

- The Xcel Energy Falcon Cam features two nest boxes: the King Plant in Oak Park Heights and the Sherco Plant in Becker, Minnesota.
- The nest boxes, which are 300 to 600 feet above the ground, imitate high cliffs.
- Installed in 1989, the nest boxes have fledged 370+ falcons.

The **Xcel Energy Foundation** and **HawkQuest**'s long-standing relationship has provided thousands of students the opportunity to learn about birds of prey in a classroom setting featuring live raptors. The partnership, which fosters education, conservation and community involvement, supports HawkQuest's mission and Xcel Energy's values.