

## ESC America's Top 10

| General Information   | Please Use this Column to Provide the Requested Information  |
|---|--|
| Organization & web address  | Center for Biological Diversity <a href="http://www.biologicaldiversity.org">http://www.biologicaldiversity.org</a>  |
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| Report Questions  |  |
| Do you have photos that can be used in the report?  | Yes  |
| Will you want printed reports?  | No   |
| If your species is selected, will you use the opportunity to organize around the species and/or publicize its plight? | Yes  |
| The Species & Its Status Questions  |  |
| Common name, genus & species  | American peregrine falcon ( <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i> )   |
| Conservation Status   | The American Peregrine Falcon is delisted  |
| Current population size   | Estimated 3,005  |
| Has the species been delisted? If yes, when? Was the recovery on time? (Skip questions 17+18.)                        | Yes, in 1999.  |
| If no, does the species have a recovery plan?   | n/a  |
| If it does have a recovery plan, what is the projected downlisting and/or delisting date?                             | n/a  |
| Background Questions (for the report profile)   |  |
| Geographic range  | The American peregrine falcon ( <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i> ) breeds only in North and Central America and occurs throughout much of North America from the subarctic boreal forests of Alaska and Canada south to Mexico [currently breeds in AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KY, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MT, NE, NV, NH, NY, NM, NJ, NC, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WI, WY]<br>key:                |
| Habitat   | (b) currently breeds, (s) seasonally present, (m) migration route, (o) occasionally present, (x) extirpated<br>Nesting habitat includes cliffs and bluffs in boreal forests, coastal cliffs and islands, urban skyscrapers and other structures, and cliffs and buttes in southwestern deserts. (info from <a href="http://ecos.fws.gov/docs/federal_register/fr3444.pdf">http://ecos.fws.gov/docs/federal_register/fr3444.pdf</a> ) |

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| Primary diet (if applicable)  | Their prey mainly consists of birds ranging from small passerines to mid-sized waterfowl. They may also feed on bats. Juveniles primarily feed on large flying insects (from FWS)   |
| <b>Public Engagement Questions (Please explain why the species is interesting, why it matters, why decision-makers + the public should care.)</b> |   |
|   | The American peregrine falcon ( <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i> ) breeds only in North and Central America and occurs throughout much of North America from the subarctic boreal forests of Alaska and Canada south to Mexico. Highly adaptable, meaning they can live in habitats ranging from the arctic tundra to forests, and even in urban cities. They are the most adaptable bird of prey in terms of habitat. The word peregrine means "having a tendency to wander," which fits the falcon since it travels great distances in migratory patterns.  |
| Interesting facts about the species   | From Animal Diversity Web: Males display at nest ledges to attract females and advertise ownership to other falcons. The development of a pair bond is first indicated by the male and female roosting near each other. Eventually they sit at the nest ledge side by side. Individuals may also peep at each other, preen, nibble their mate's toes, or "bill" (gently grab the other bird's bill in their own). Both sexes may then engage in "ledge displays", centered on the area of their nest, or scrape. Prior to egg-laying, the pair will engage in incredible aerial displays, involving power dives, tight cornering, high soaring, and body rolls during a dive. Once the pair has formed, they begin to hunt cooperatively and females begin to beg for food from the male. (White, et al., 2002)<br>From Wikipedia: Females are considerably larger than males. The Peregrine is renowned for its speed, reaching over 322 km/h (200 mph) during its characteristic hunting stoop (high speed dive), making it the fastest member of the animal kingdom. According to a National Geographic program, the highest measured speed of a Peregrine Falcon is 389 km/h (242 mph). |
| Additional background information to complete the species profile in the report.  | Much like the Bald Eagle, DDT-caused egg thinning led to a massive dropoff in population (from an estimated 3,875 in the 1940s to just 324 in 1975). Federal ban on DDT was in large part responsible for the dramatic recovery of the American Peregrine Falcon.<br>Importance of federal directives in the recovery of the falcon--the ban on DDT was "the single-most significant action in the recovery of the peregrine falcon"  |
| What are the most important messages that should be communicated about this success story?  | Banning toxic substances is key for the survival of numerous bird species, such as lead shot.   |

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Outline and describe the **existing threats** that might impede its recovery, e.g., new threats to its habitat, etc. Include any potential political threats, e.g., a Congressional delisting before its time. Cite any substantiating scientific studies.

Today, DDE is still found in some areas and DDT is used in some countries where the peregrine falcon winters.

### Criteria-Specific Questions

Detail the ecological and scientific importance of the species. Note if it is a keystone species. Describe its role in the biodiversity of its environment. Cite any substantiating scientific studies.

From Animal Diversity Web: Because they are high level predators, peregrine falcons play an important role in regulating populations of their prey, particularly pigeons and doves (Columbidae), ptarmigan (Lagopus), and ducks (Anatidae) (White, et al., 2002)

Provide information on any additional benefits the species provides, such as economic, medicinal, or ecosystem services.

As a species that can be found in cities, peregrines generate much excitement among citizens when they're nests are built on skyscrapers.

### Judge's score for importance of species.

What recovery actions have been taken for the species?

In 1970, the American peregrine was listed as endangered and efforts to recover the species began. The use of DDT was banned in Canada in 1970 and in the United States in 1972. This was the single-most significant action in the recovery of the peregrine falcon. In addition, in the eastern United States, efforts were made to reestablish peregrine falcons by releasing offspring from a variety of wild stocks that were held in captivity by falconers [1]. The first experimental releases of captive-produced young occurred in 1974 and 1975 in the eastern United States [1]. These and future releases demonstrated that "hacking," the practice of retaining and feeding young captive bred birds in partial captivity until they are able to fend for themselves, was an effective method of introducing captive-bred peregrines to the wild [1]. Since then, more than 6,000 falcons have been released in North America [1]. Approximately 3,400 peregrines were released in parts of southwest Canada, the northern Rocky Mountain States, and the Pacific Coast states [1].

Why were those recovery actions successful?

Scientists found that DDE (and thus DDT) was the leading cause of population decreases in the Peregrine Falcon. This was the most effective measure taken.

If there are or have been multi-agency and/or public/private collaboration to protect the species, please describe.

Yes, see below.

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Please detail the species' recovery. What increases have there been in the size of the population and in the number of populations?  
If there is political support for the conservation of the species, please explain.  
Are there actions that need to be taken by government officials and/or NGOs to continue the recovery?  
Are there additional actions that individuals can take to continue the species' recovery?

In the late 1970s, Alaska became the first place American peregrine falcon population growth was documented and, by 1980, populations began to grow in other areas [1]. Not only did the number of peregrine falcons begin to increase, productivity (another important measure of population health) improved [1]. Efforts to reestablish peregrine falcons in the East and Midwest proved largely successful, leading to downlisting of the species in 1984 [1], and by 1999 peregrines were found to be nesting in all states within their historical range east of the 100th meridian, except for Rhode Island, West Virginia and Arkansas [1]. In highly urban areas, peregrine falcons showed great adaptability, and began substituting skyscrapers for natural cliff faces as nesting sites [4]. By 1998, the total known breeding population of peregrine falcons was 1,650 pairs in the United States and Canada, far exceeding the recovery goal of 456 pairs. Other recovery goals, including estimates of productivity, egg-shell thickness, and contaminants levels, had also been met, allowing the species to be delisted in 1999 [1]. Monitoring of American

Recovered. N/A.

Continued monitoring.

### Judge's score for recovery.

#### Final Judge's Score

0

Please submit to Nancy Welch at [nwelch@endangered.org](mailto:nwelch@endangered.org) by July 3, 2013. Thank you for participating in the 2013 Top Ten Report.

- [1] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1999. Final Rule to Remove the American Peregrine Falcon from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife, and to Remove the Similarity of Appearance Provision for Free-Flying Peregrines in the Conterminous United States.  
[2] Hoffman, C. 1999. The Peregrine Falcon is Back! New release, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, August 20, 1999.  
[3] Clark, K. 2005. The Peregrine Falcon in New Jersey, Report for 2005. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Endangered and Nongame Species Program.  
[4] New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. Fact sheet, Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Endangered and Nongame Species Program. Website  
[5] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2003. Monitoring Plan for the American Peregrine Falcon, A Species Recovered Under the Endangered Species Act. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Endangered Species and Migratory Birds and State Programs. Pacific Region,  
[6] Green, M., T. Swem, M. Morin, R. Mesta, M. Klee, K. Hollar, R. Hazelwood, P. Delphey, R. Currie, and M. Aramal. 2006. Monitoring Results for Breeding American Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), 2003. Biological Technical Publication BTP-R1005-2006. U.S.