

# Peregrine

## *Falco peregrinus*

### Status

Amber listed: SPEC 3 (R)  
Schedule 1 of WCA 1981  
Annex I of EC Wild Birds Directive

### National monitoring

National surveys: 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 (BTO/JNCC and regional raptor groups), 2001.  
Annual surveys of known sites (Raptor Study Groups).

### Population and distribution

The peregrine breeds across much of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, although in England its breeding distribution is concentrated in the north and west and on the south-west coast (*88-91 Atlas*). The peregrine breeding population was severely depleted in the 1950s and 1960s due to the effects of pesticide contamination (Crick and Ratcliffe 1995). Recently the population has recovered in many areas and the present UK breeding population is estimated at 1,285 pairs (*Population Estimates*).

### Ecology

Peregrines breed mainly on coastal, moorland and mountain terrain with undisturbed cliffs and crags providing nesting sites (*Red Data Birds*). Other alternative sites used are: quarries, nests on the ground, industrial waste-tips with scarped faces, open-cast coal workings and mine excavations, tall chimneys, bridges, warehouses and low rocks on top of moorland hills. The recent recovery in peregrine numbers has led to an increase in the use of more unusual nest-sites, eg worked quarries and buildings (Crick and Ratcliffe 1995). A clutch of usually 3-4 eggs is laid from mid-March to May; there is one brood and the young fledge from the end of May (*Red Data Birds*).

## Breeding season survey – population

This method is based on that used for the 1991 Peregrine survey (BTO 1991, Crick and Ratcliffe 1995).

#### Information required

- number and location of all potential peregrine nest-sites
- number and location of all occupied territories.

#### Number and timing of visits

One visit in late March. If no birds are recorded, a further visit may be necessary one month later. (This does not include visits to assess breeding success, mentioned below.)

#### Time of day

Any time of day.

**Sites/areas to visit**

All potentially suitable peregrine nesting sites within the survey area, including traditional nest-sites and all possible alternative sites.

**Equipment**

- 1:25,000 map of the survey area
- recording form
- Schedule 1 licence.

**Safety reminders**

If you are going to undertake extended coastal or mountain walks, tell someone where you are going and when you intend to return. Do not attempt to climb cliffs.

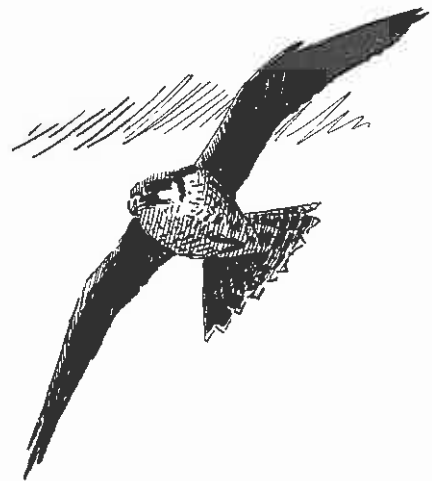
**Disturbance**

There is no need to get close to a nest-site when recording the breeding population in March and April; observations from a distance will suffice. Carry minimal site information, keep it confidential and be alert to any suspicious activities.

**Methods**

Mark the boundary of the survey area on to the map. Map all the potential peregrine nest-sites as follows:

- × Potential nest-sites located during the survey.
- ⊗ Sites occupied by peregrines during the survey.
- Sites at which peregrines bred during the survey.
- Sites lost (destroyed/developed) during the survey.



Outline and hatch any areas which were not searched because they were unsuitable or because access permission was denied.

Thoroughly search the study area for suitable nesting sites in late March. Record all potential sites, both known sites and those not previously known to have held breeding peregrines. Record the number of peregrines present at these sites. A site recording form (see example in Figure 1) should be completed for each site (including empty or unoccupied sites). Ensure that the grid references given allow cross-referencing with mapped information.

If any peregrines are seen at a potential nest-site on the first visit, consider it occupied and do not make any more visits to that site (except to check breeding success later in the season; see below). If no peregrines are seen on the first visit, make another a month later (end of April) to try to confirm occupancy.

The presence of one or more peregrines at a suitable site is regarded as evidence of territorial occupation. Report the number of potential peregrine nest-sites and the number of occupied peregrine nest-sites.

**CONFIDENTIAL PEREGRINE SURVEY SITE RECORDING FORM**

OBSERVER: \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

SITE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ GRID REF(6 fig): \_\_\_\_\_

**SITE DESCRIPTION (Please tick boxes)**

Traditional (pre-1939)	Recent (1939-81)	New (post 1981)	Uncertain of site age
Regularly used (in most years)	Occasionally used	Not sure how often used	

Brief site description:  
 coastal: \_\_\_\_\_  
 inland: \_\_\_\_\_

Main land-use in area: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in the date of the visit in the space provided

Visit summary (give numbers or tick box if unsure)	Visit 1 Date:	Comments	Visit 2 Date:	Comments	Visit 3 Date:	Comments	Visit 4 Date:	Comments	Visit 5 Date:	Comments	Visit 6 Date:	Comments

Additional sites checked (date and grid reference if applicable):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Please also pass on this, and more detailed habitat information, to the British Trust for Ornithology's Nest Record Scheme, write to them for record cards and more information.

**Figure 1**  
 An example of the peregrine survey site recording form used in 1991.

## Breeding season survey – breeding success

Please try to contribute this and relevant habitat information to the BTO's Nest Record Scheme.

### Information required

- number of fledged young or evidence of fledged young.

### Number and timing of visits

At least two visits, in June.

### Time of day

Any time during the day.

### Sites/areas to visit

Occupied sites found in March or April

### Equipment

- recording form (same as used for population survey)
- Schedule 1 licence.

### Safety reminders

If you are in any doubt about the safety of getting near to a nest, watch it from a distance and do not attempt to get close.

### Disturbance

Keep disturbance to an absolute minimum; some pointers on how to achieve this are given below. Remember that a Schedule 1 licence is required to approach a peregrine nest.

### Methods

In June, revisit those sites found to be occupied in March and April in order to look for large young or evidence that young have fledged from the site. Wherever possible, observe the nest from a good, distant vantage point to try and obtain this evidence. If chicks are present, a further visit will be required unless the chicks are well-grown and close to fledging. If you have to visit the nest, a licence will be required and great care must be taken. Do not cause any accidental damage to the nest, as this may lead to desertion or reveal the nest to predators. It is especially important to make your initial observations from a distance because startled brooding adults can inadvertently carry small young to the edge of the nest (or even out of it) by their rapid departure.

Record the presence of any adults, eggs, or young on the site recording form.

### References

- BTO (1991) *Guidelines and Site Record Form for the Fourth BTO Peregrine Survey 1991*. BTO, Norfolk.
- Crick, H Q P and Ratcliffe, D A (1995) The peregrine *Falco peregrinus* breeding population of the United Kingdom in 1991. *Bird Study* 42: 1–19.