

## PEREGRINE FALCON *FALCO PEREGRINUS* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The peregrine falcon is not afforded priority status in the UKBAP, but it is considered to be important for biodiversity conservation locally.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority species (P) or species of conservation concern (S)	S
EC Birds Directive 1979	Annex II, IV
Conservation Regulations 1994	Sch. 2
Berne Convention 1982	App. II
Bonn Convention 1979	-
CITES 1975	-
WCA 1981	Part I Section 1 Sch. 5
Birds of Conservation Concern List <sup>30</sup>	Amber
IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals 1994	lower risk - conservation dependent



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### 2. CURRENT STATUS

#### 2.1 UK and Wales

The peregrine should be the world's most successful bird. It is an expert and powerful hunter, and is the world's fastest moving animal. However, world populations have crashed dramatically in the last decade, leaving European populations as vitally important globally. The UK holds 15% of the European population, and approximately 50% of the English/Welsh population is in Wales, mainly in and around the mining valleys.

In 1960, as a result of pigeon racers' claims that an excessive population of peregrines was responsible for losses of homing pigeons, a BTO inquiry took place. However, the results of the inquiry showed that the population had actually declined by around 40%. This decrease was attributed to the past use of DDT resulting in the thinning of eggshells. In 1963, there were approximately 360 pairs remaining in Britain. Since then, however, the British population has made a significant recovery as a result of the restriction of organochlorines and enhanced conservation efforts, including improved legal protection. There are now over 1283 pairs<sup>12</sup>. Numbers, however, have not recovered in southeast England and east Yorkshire; whilst in northern Scotland there have been further declines in the last decade. Persecution by humans is now the only real threat to the success of the peregrine falcon population.

The species currently occupies around 95% of its potential UK breeding range<sup>26</sup>, but the peregrine is now in decline in some areas of Wales, mainly in and around the mining valleys. Only 259 pairs were recorded in Wales during the last Welsh national survey in 1991. The 2001 national survey was postponed due to the foot and mouth disease epidemic, and will take place this year (2002).

#### 2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

In Caerphilly county borough peregrines are associated with quarries and upland cliffs, with each pair holding a large hunting territory. Some birds will also use large buildings or pylons as nesting ledges, although there are no records of this in the county borough. Peregrines are

found at scattered locations throughout the county borough, but are regularly disturbed and there have been many occasions where pairs have failed to breed. In 1998, five dead peregrines were found and increased to 7 in the year 2000. All were analysed and found to contain extremely high levels of toxins, high enough to seriously affect a human handling them. These birds had been targeted because pigeons were found staked down nearby covered with the poison.

### 2.3 Links with Habitats

- *Common Land*
- **Post-Industrial Land** (quarries)
- *Urban Habitats* (old buildings) (tall structures)
- Sea cliffs

## 3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- A reduction in moorland birds has led to peregrines preying on racing pigeons as an alternative food source. Pigeon racing is a popular sport in the South Wales Valleys. The high level of persecution of peregrines in this area is thought to be due to the attempts by some pigeon owners to protect their birds.
- Poor weather, especially rain, causes the loss of eggs.
- Loss of nest sites through infilling of old quarry faces.
- Theft of eggs and chicks to supply egg collectors and falconers, although this can be discounted as a limiting factor.
- Disturbance at the nest sites by unauthorised activities, such as climbing and shooting. This is rare except to purposely target peregrines. Climbing is more of a problem in places such as the Lake District.
- Pesticides and rodenticides used on agricultural land can be passed up through the food web to the peregrine.

## 4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 The Environment Agency (EA), Police, RSPB, NAWAD and other organisations forming the South Wales Peregrine Watch currently operates protection and monitoring schemes at known nest sites in South Wales.
- 4.2 UK surveys of peregrines (other birds of prey) are organised every 10 years by the RSPB and government agencies. The last survey was in 1991 and the 2001 survey has been postponed until 2002 due to the foot and mouth disease outbreak.
- 4.3 The RSPB Investigations Unit provides specialist advice and training to the police involved in bird crimes<sup>29</sup>.
- 4.4 The UK Government Campaign Against the Illegal Poisoning of Wildlife is supported by the RSPB and other conservation and countryside organisations in investigating incidents

of wildlife poisoning (Poisons Hotline = 0800 321 600; ring if you find a dead bird or other animal in suspicious circumstances). They also educate farmers and landowners about the need to use chemicals properly<sup>29</sup>.

- 4.5 The Gwent Ornithological Society and Glamorgan Bird Club gather information from its members on the distribution of peregrines and both bodies publish annual bird reports<sup>17, 18, 19</sup>.
- 4.6 The BTO Breeding Bird Survey also contributes to the annual monitoring and recording of peregrine populations<sup>6</sup>.

## 5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

### 5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable to this species.

### 5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Maintain, and where possible enhance, the number of breeding pairs in the county borough (Target: ongoing).

## 6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<b>6.1 Policy and Legislation</b>											
6.1.1 Seek to designate all known nesting sites as SIN C.	CCBC	SWPW									✓
<b>6.2 Site Safeguard and Management</b>											
6.2.2 Seek to include the needs of peregrines in the management of SIN Cs and N/LNRs that support peregrines.	CCBC	GWT GLWT RSPB CCW	✓								✓
<b>6.3 Species Management and Protection</b>											
6.3.1 Encourage the reporting of all evidence of persecution to the RSPB and the South Wales and Gwent Police. There are several Wildlife Liaison Officers who deal with ongoing problems such as illegal killing, bird theft, egg collecting and disturbance.	CBP	SWPW Gwent Police RSPB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3.2 Support and promote the Peregrine Watch scheme by reporting incidents of persecution to Wildlife Liaison Officers.	CBP	Gwent Police	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3.2 Ensure all planning permissions for quarry extensions make provision for existing nest sites and provide new nest ledges on completed quarry faces well in advance of the breeding season.	CCBC	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:									
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
<b>6.4 Advisory</b>												
6.4.1 Educate land managers of the need to reduce the use of rodenticides and pesticides through carefully targeted use, or alternative methods of pest control.	NAWAD	FUW NFU CCBC CCW		✓								
6.4.2 Liaise with pigeon organisations to raise their awareness of the peregrine and the measures available to prevent pigeon losses and therefore avoid confrontation with the law.	CBP	(SWPW)	✓									
<b>6.5 Future Research and Monitoring</b>												
6.5.1 Monitor all known nesting sites annually through South Wales Peregrine Watch members, to maintain a breeding record and safeguard against persecution [results are given to RSPB and CCW].	SWPW	CCW GBC GOS BTO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5.2 Monitor peregrine populations through ringing surveys, gaining important information about dispersal, recruitment and longevity.	SWPW	BTO GBC GOS		✓			✓				✓	
6.5.3 Take part in the national peregrine surveys including 2002 and every 10 years thereafter.	SWPW	BTO GBC GOS	✓									
<b>6.6 Communications and Publicity</b>												
6.6.1 Encourage membership of wildlife trusts and local bird clubs.	CBP	RSPB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6.2 Provide schools and colleges in the county borough with information in order to educate children, parents and teachers about the conservation of the peregrine in the area.	CBP	CCBC Schools Youth Forum	✓									
6.6.3 Discourage the use of insecticides and rodenticides in any publicity material.	CBP	RSPB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6.4 Raise awareness of the plight of the peregrine, and use it to promote the value of quarry habitats.	CBP	RSPB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6.5 Raise awareness and carry out research into the problem of peregrines and pigeons. There is a need in the South Wales Valleys to ease the persecution of peregrines which could be achieved through working together with pigeon-fanciers.	CBP	-		✓								
6.6.6 Use the peregrine as a 'flagship' species to highlight and promote the well being of the countryside and hence ourselves.	CBP	-	✓									