



File Code: 1010

Date: January 24, 2000

Dear Climbing Community:

It's that time of year when we prepare to welcome back North Carolina's peregrine falcons. The peregrine falcon was down-listed from federally endangered this past year due to its successful restoration throughout the United States. However, the falcon is still listed as Sensitive on both the Regional Forester's Sensitive list and the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forest Sensitive list. Western North Carolina historically (pre-1964) maintained 10 nest sites and we are very close to maintaining this number with past years' returning peregrines averaging 8 nest sites. However reproduction continues to be a real concern. In 1998, only one pair successfully produced young, and , in 1999, three pair successfully produced 8 young. Beth Bockoven, a graduate student at Western Carolina University, completed research in conjunction with North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission on various aspects of peregrine falcons in the Southern Appalachians, including studies in North Carolina. Her final report is expected to be available soon, but the preliminary analyses are as follows: studies of the egg shells to determine if their thickness was influenced by chemical use were negative; prey remains gathered at nest sites did not indicate a cause for low reproduction rates; Geographic Information System (GIS) studies, using 17 habitat variables, comparing 54 historic sites in NC, SC, TN, WV, VA, AL, and GA versus present day sites, do not provide a correlation or explanation but are highly variable. One adult peregrine was found dead in Linville Gorge but was too decayed to determine the cause of death.

Until such time as North Carolina can maintain a healthy reproduction rate and successfully raise young peregrine falcons, the existing closures will be maintained, posted, and enforced.

Closure Areas (See attached maps)

[Whitesides Mountain, Highlands Ranger District](#)

[Big Lost Cove Cliffs and Linville Gorge](#) (Gold Coast and the North Carolina Wall), Grandfather Ranger District

[Whiterock Cliff](#), Madison County and [Eagle Cliff](#), Mitchell County, Appalachian Ranger District

[Looking Glass Rock](#), Pisgah Ranger District

It is prohibited to go into or be upon the areas defined above from January 15 to August 15. Areas are defined by orange painted boundaries or are posted. However, we have experienced considerable vandalism with our signing of the trail head for Big Lost Cove Cliffs and the North Carolina



Wall. This closure is in effect for the areas listed regardless of whether or not posted signs are present.

If you have any questions regarding these areas or would like a copy of the closure notice, please call Sandy Florence at (828) 652-2144. Thank you for your continued cooperation in the restoration efforts for this magnificent bird of prey.

Sincerely,

/s/ John F. Ramey

JOHN F. RAMEY
Forest Supervisor