



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PROPOSED "THREATENED" STATUS REFLECTS IMPROVEMENT FOR ARCTIC PEREGRINE FALCONS; OTHER RULE CHANGES PROPOSED FOR PEREGRINES

The Arctic peregrine falcon, listed as an "endangered" species since 1970, has recovered sufficiently from the effects of environmental contaminants to be reclassified to "threatened" status, according to the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Endangered" means that a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened," a less dire status, means that a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future. A proposal to reclassify the Arctic peregrine to "threatened" status has been published in the Federal Register.

Data gathered by wildlife biologists indicate that the Arctic peregrine is not now endangered through a significant portion of its range. Levels of DDT and its metabolites have been decreasing in female peregrine falcons and the number of young falcons produced annually has increased since the mid-1970's. Strong protective regulations, vigorous law enforcement, and relatively secure habitat have also contributed to the Arctic peregrine's improved status.

The Arctic is one of three subspecies of peregrine falcons in North America. Arctic peregrines nest in Arctic regions from Alaska through Canada to Greenland and winter from the southern United States through all of Central and South America to central Chile and Argentina.

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A second subspecies, the American peregrine, was extirpated as a nesting bird in the Eastern United States during the 1960's and has been the subject of intensive recovery efforts, including release of captive-bred birds to the wild. The American peregrine remains classified as "endangered." A third subspecies, Peale's peregrine, is not considered "endangered" or "threatened."

In addition to proposing reclassification for the Arctic peregrine falcon, the Fish and Wildlife Service has also proposed to clarify the status of the American peregrine falcon in some parts of its range. The most significant effect of this proposal would be to recognize all peregrine falcons nesting in the State of Washington to be the "endangered" American peregrine subspecies.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has also proposed to protect all wild peregrine falcons within 48 contiguous States whose genetic background is uncertain under "similarity of appearance" provisions of the Endangered Species Act. This proposal is necessary primarily for law enforcement purposes and to clarify the status of peregrine falcons that are bred in captivity and released to the wild. Although such birds are indistinguishable in appearance from wild, protected falcons, their genetic backgrounds often made them ineligible for full protection under the Endangered Species Act. The new proposal would make taking of any wild peregrine within the 48 States a violation of the Endangered Species Act.

Comments on the proposals are invited through May 31, 1983, and should be addressed to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.