



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### ARCTIC PEREGRINE FALCON RECLASSIFIED TO "THREATENED;" OTHER PROTECTIONS FOR PEREGRINES EXTENDED

The Arctic peregrine falcon, first listed as an endangered species in 1970, has been reclassified as "threatened." The species is no longer in danger of extinction throughout a significant portion of its range, which extends from Alaska to Greenland in summer and south to South America in winter. The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that at least 3,000 pairs of these peregrines are found in the Arctic and sub-Arctic areas of North America.

The Fish and Wildlife Service published the reclassification in the March 20, 1984 Federal Register. Under "similarity of appearance" provisions of the Endangered Species Act, the notice also extends legal protections granted to any type of peregrine falcon in the continental United States. A wild peregrine falcon or a captive-bred peregrine released under government or privately sponsored restoration programs will now be fully protected throughout the lower 48 States.

Levels of DDT and its breakdown products have been decreasing in female Arctic peregrines. The number of young falcons produced annually has risen as the pesticide's interference in the species' reproductive processes has diminished. The Arctic peregrine still faces a continuing threat from DDT use in Central and South America, however.

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By using the "similarity of appearance" provision to protect all wild peregrines in the lower 48 States, the Service can clarify the status of birds that are produced in captivity and put its law enforcement activities in behalf of the entire species on an equal basis. Although captive-reared peregrines are indistinguishable in appearance from wild peregrines, their mixed genetic heritage has made them ineligible for full protection under the Endangered Species Act in the past. With this provision, harming any free-flying peregrine would be prohibited by the act, broadening the scope of the protections.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has also clarified the status of the species in western Washington State by determining all peregrines nesting on the Olympic Peninsula to be "endangered" American peregrine falcons which are eligible for full protection under the Endangered Species Act. Both the American peregrine and its non-endangered cousin, the Peale's peregrine, are found in this area. The Service's action now addresses this overlap in range by designating all nesting peregrines in this area as an endangered species. The State of Washington already classifies all peregrine subspecies as endangered and does not allow any taking, except under strict permit. Only three active peregrine nest sites are known in western Washington, and this notice of extension of the rule will only apply to a small number of birds.

These rules become effective on April 19, 1984.