

WISCONSIN ENDANGERED RESOURCES REPORT 27

WISCONSIN PEREGRINE FALCON RECOVERY PLAN

by Charlene M. Gieck

SUMMARY

This plan delineates and schedules actions required to restore a viable breeding population of the peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus) in Wisconsin. The goal is to have 20 breeding pairs in Wisconsin. The interim objective is to have 10 breeding pairs by the year 2000. The goals will be re-evaluated at that time. Success will depend upon available habitat and release success in Wisconsin and other midwestern states.

Planned recovery activities include:

1. Inventory, assess, and protect nesting habitat. Sites formerly occupied and potential nesting sites will be located and assessed. Site-specific management plans will be developed. Sites on private and public lands will be protected by easements or land-use agreements. Predator control techniques will be used to protect released birds.
2. Establish reintroduction program. Three areas--Mississippi River, downtown Milwaukee, and Devil's Lake State Park--will be the initial (1987) sites for releasing birds. The releases will involve 3 types: tower or hacking release, building release, and foster parent release. Future release sites will be chosen from the inventory of suitable habitat.

Peregrines will be acquired through the Minnesota Project from private breeders. Construction materials and some site attendant time will be donated. Birds will be monitored with radio-telemetry equipment if funding allows. Release sites will be surveyed annually for breeding activities.

3. Provide peregrine protection. Law enforcement personnel will be kept informed of nesting and release activities. Supplements will be developed for Hunter and Falconry Training Programs. Monitoring for environmental contaminants will be conducted around the nesting and feeding areas.
4. Implement coordination, information, and education. Close coordination will be maintained among five midwestern states--Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa. The public will be provided with updates on the project and general information on the peregrine falcon.

Evaluation of the peregrine falcon's status will be ongoing.



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CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: January 27, 1987 *File Ref:* 1720

To: James R. Huntoon - AD/5
Administrator, Resources Management

From: Ronald F. Nicotera
Director, Bureau of Endangered Resources

Subject: Wisconsin Peregrine Falcon Recovery Plan

Please review and approve the attached Recovery Plan. The Executive Summary briefly explains the plan.

Comments from experts in the DNR, the University System, and the private sector have been incorporated.

This plan is a dynamic document which will be revised as necessary to incorporate new techniques, facts, and goal changes.

Copies of the plan will be disseminated to the persons providing direct comments and any others requesting copies.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

APPROVED:


James R. Huntoon


Date

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Executive Summary

The Wisconsin Peregrine Falcon Recovery Plan delineates and schedules actions required for restoration of a viable breeding population of the peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus) in Wisconsin. The goal is to have 20 breeding pairs in Wisconsin. The interim objective is to have 50% of this level or 10 breeding pairs by the year 2000. The goals will be re-evaluated at that time. Success will depend upon available habitat and release success (both in Wisconsin and other Midwest States).

The Wisconsin Recovery Plan was developed in general conformity with, and in several sections taken verbatim from, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Eastern Peregrine Falcon Recovery Plan (Bollengier 1979) and "A Proposal for the Restoration of the Peregrine Falcon to the Upper Mississippi River and other Midwestern Areas" (Redig et al, 1981). Although written to supplement the Federal Plan, the Wisconsin Plan represents the opinion of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and has not received official approval from USFWS, the Eastern Peregrine Falcon Recovery Team, nor the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology.

The plan is divided into two major segments. Part I--Recovery Action Plan, details the efforts required for recovery; Part II--Background, details the life history and status of the peregrine falcon.

Recovery Action Plan activities are grouped under 4 general categories:

1. Inventory, assess, and protect nesting habitat. Sites formerly occupied and potential nesting sites will be located and assessed. Site-specific management plans will be developed. Sites on private and public lands will be protected by easements or land use agreements. Predator control techniques will be used to protect released birds.
2. Establish reintroduction program. Three areas--Mississippi River, downtown Milwaukee, and Devil's Lake State Park--will be the initial (1987) sites for releasing birds. The releases will involve 3 types: tower or hacking release, building release, and foster parent release. Future release sites will be chosen from the inventory of suitable habitat.

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3. Provide peregrine protection. Law enforcement personnel will be kept informed of nesting and release activities. Supplements will be developed for Hunter and Falconry Training Programs. Monitoring for environmental contaminants will be conducted around the nesting and feeding areas.
4. Implement coordination, information, and education. Close coordination will be maintained among five Midwest states--Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa. The public will be provided with updates on the project and general information on the peregrine falcon.

The plan has been reviewed by Bureau of Endangered Resources (BER) staff, Wildlife Management staff, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, outside experts, and the Resource Management Administrator. Comments were reviewed and incorporated in many cases.

Evaluation of the peregrine falcon's status will be ongoing.



Preface

This Recovery Plan was prepared by Charlene M. Gieck, Natural Resources Specialist, WDNR-Bureau of Endangered Resources. It was reviewed by the Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and experts from Wisconsin and other states.

The plan will be revised as necessary to incorporate new techniques and facts. Goals and objectives will be modified as tasks are completed or as priorities and budgetary constraints require.

Additional copies may be obtained from:

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
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Acknowledgements

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Endangered Resources
Wildlife Management
Research
Information and Education
Law Enforcement

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Part I. RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

A. Recovery Goal

The ultimate goal of this Recovery Plan is to restore a viable wild population of peregrine falcons in Wisconsin. An interim objective is to attain a self-sustaining, wild nesting population at a level of 50-percent of the estimated 20 breeding pairs known to have occurred in the early 1950's. This objective can be accomplished by implementing the following strategies: inventory and protect nesting habitat, restore the peregrine population through introduction of captive-produced birds, provide protection, and develop information and education programs. Captive-produced birds will be released at a rate of 10-20 birds per year until 1995 at which time the released and wild-produced birds should equal 10 breeding pairs. See Life Table, Figure 1. Some breeding birds may repopulate Wisconsin from Minnesota or Michigan releases.

B. Plan Outline and Justification

1. Inventory, assess, and protect nesting habitat.

An inventory of nest sites of the U.S. east of Mississippi River was conducted by Hickey in the early forties (1942), repeated in 1964 by Berger, Sindelar and Gamble (1969), and repeated in part by Cornell University representatives during the spring and summer of 1975. It is believed that approximately 20 suitable sites are left in Wisconsin (Natural Heritage Inventory Files). These are mapped in confidential DNR files. The proposed 1987 survey would include the Mississippi River between Prescott and Eastern Dubuque, Illinois, the south central Wisconsin area, Door County and selected cliffs in northern Wisconsin.

1.1 Inventory and assess potential nesting sites.

1.11 Locate and assess sites to determine suitability for falcon occupancy. Assessment criteria and other necessary information on each site are described in Appendix 1 - Eyries Inventory and Site Assessment Form. These sites may be used to determine where population centers could be re-established through releases.

1.12 Annually monitor traditional and potential sites for breeding activity.

1.2 Protect and manage suitable potential nest sites.

1.21 Prepare site-specific management plans. Assure control of habitat through acquisition, easement, lease or cooperative agreement. A sample management plan format is presented in Appendix 2 as a guideline. Management needs vary considerably between

