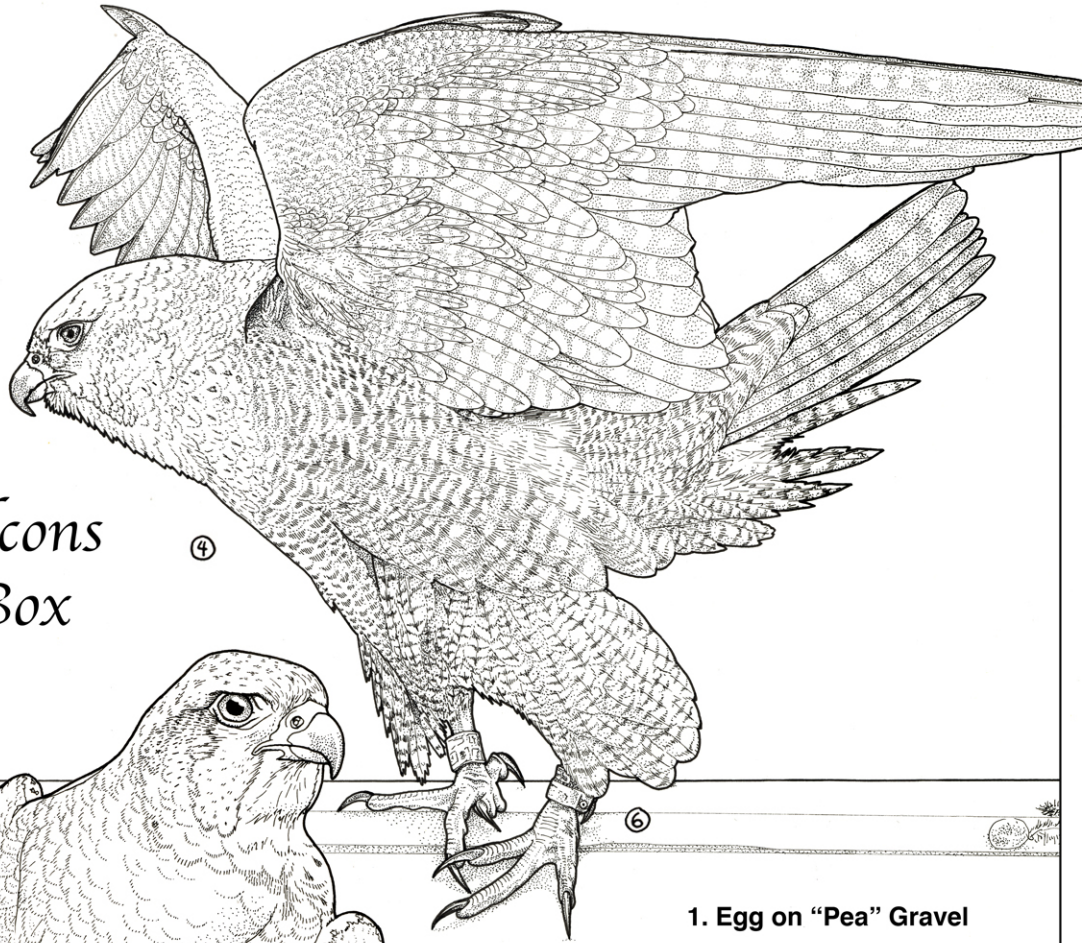


Peregrine Falcons at Nesting Box

(*Falco peregrinus*)



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1. Egg on "Pea" Gravel

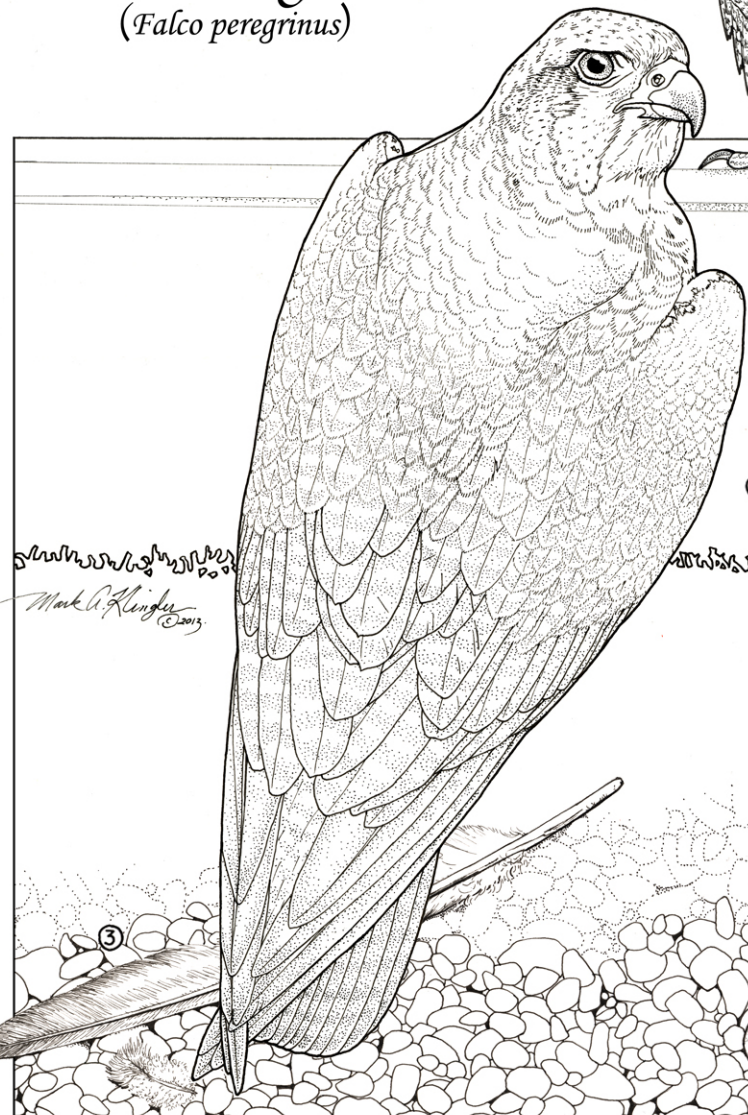
2. Young Peregrine

3. Food/prey's Feathers

4. Adult Female "Dorothy"

5. Adult Male "E2"

6. Coded Leg Bands



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Mark A. Klingler 2013

Handwritten scribbles and signatures

Artwork: Mark A. Klingler & Text: Cathy Klingler

In memory of G. Alec 'Doc' Stewart, University of Pittsburgh Honors College

Sources: Outside My Window with Kate St. John, www.wqed.org/birdblog/, Pitt Peregrine Falcon Cam of National Aviary, www.aviary.org/PF-NestCam1
 Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), <http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/falcon/default.htm>
 The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, www.waterlandlife.org/356/

The beautiful peregrine falcon teaches us how important it is to protect the ecosystem!

One hundred years ago, the peregrine falcon was a very common bird. By 1965, peregrines had almost gone extinct because of human behavior such as hunting and use of pesticides. The peregrine falcon was the very first species to be put on America's Federally Endangered Species List when it was created in 1974. After many years of work by people who wanted to protect the environment, the peregrine falcon lives all over the United States again—including on the tallest towers in our busiest cities.

Life Cycle

The peregrine falcon is known for its amazing flying ability and for being a good parent. Follow along with the numbers on the front of this coloring page to learn more about peregrines.

1. Each year in the winter, single male peregrines look for mates and territories to claim as their own. When a male finds a female that he would like to have as a mate, they swoop together to show off their flying skills. This is called "courting." If the female already has a mate, the new male may have to fight to take over the territory. Sometimes, a female will even try to take over another female's nest!
Once a male and female peregrine have chosen each other, they mate for life. In February, the pair dig a shallow hole, called a "scrape," for their eggs. In the wild, peregrines like to nest on cliffs and high rock ledges. In cities, they choose buildings and bridges. Sometimes conservation workers supply nesting boxes filled with the pea-sized gravel that the birds like. The female lays 3-6 speckled eggs, but does not sit on them until nearly all of her eggs have been laid.
2. The chicks hatch after about 4 weeks. The baby birds are covered with fluffy white feathers and are about the size of your fist. Unlike some other birds of prey, the peregrine falcon does not shove weak chicks out of the nest. The parents feed and raise all of the chicks equally.
3. The peregrine is the fastest animal in the world! It can dive—or "stoop"—at speeds of more than 200 mph (320 kph). It hunts by flying at birds and grabbing them right out of the air. The peregrine parents bring the food back to the nest and tear off pieces for the chicks. Peregrines mostly hunt

medium-sized birds such as pigeons.

After about 6 weeks, the chicks are old enough for "ledge walking"—they sit on the edge of the cliff or nesting box and watch as their parents fly in crazy patterns all around them. It's like the parents are trying to show the chicks how much fun it is to fly! Finally the chicks are strong enough to try flying for the first time. This is called "fledging," and it is a very exciting thing to watch!

University of Pittsburgh's Peregrines

4. The female peregrine at Pitt's Cathedral of Learning is called Dorothy. She hatched in 1999 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She has nested at Pitt since 2002 and has fledged more than 40 chicks with her two mates.
5. Dorothy's newest mate is Erie 2, nicknamed E2. He hatched in 2005 at the Gulf Tower nesting box in downtown Pittsburgh. In 2007 E2 became Dorothy's mate after her first partner, Erie, disappeared.
6. The Pennsylvania Game Commission continues to work with such groups as the National Aviary and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to provide peregrine falcons with safe places to nest. Part of this program includes "bird banding." A bird band is a kind of ankle bracelet that conservation workers place on the chicks' legs just before they are ready to fledge. The bands do not hurt the birds, and each band has a code which helps researchers identify and study the birds.

How can you help?

The peregrine falcon was taken off of the U.S. endangered species list in 1999, but it is still an endangered species in Pennsylvania. Other endangered Pennsylvania species include the Indiana bat, bog turtle, and Atlantic sturgeon. Here are some easy things you can do to help endangered species and all kinds of other plants and animals, too!

1. **Keep it clean.** Pollution makes it hard for animals to find safe places to live and healthy food to eat.
2. **Look, but don't touch.** It's fun to go exploring, but any eggs or baby animals you find are hands-off. The parents are usually close by and can take care of their own youngsters.
3. **Talk about it.** Let your family and friends know how important it is to take care of the environment and all the critters that live in it...including humans!

Text: Cathy Klingler & Artwork: Mark A. Klingler

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