

PEREGRINE FALCON STATUS IN IOWA

The Peregrine Falcon was once a regularly occurring species throughout the upper Midwest. Original population has been estimated at fifty nesting pairs throughout the Midwest.

The original Peregrine Falcon population in Iowa probably numbered about **ten pairs in any one year**; about eight pairs along the Mississippi River and its tributaries, and two or three pairs along several interior rivers.

From 1982 through 2003, a total of 875 peregrines were released by hacking in the Midwest. Independent releases were also conducted in Missouri, Kentucky and western Ontario.

Efforts to reestablish peregrines in Iowa began in 1989 at Cedar Rapids where 23 falcons were released in two years. In 1991 nineteen were released in Des Moines. In 1992, eight were released in Muscatine. From these 50 falcons, two pairs successfully nested in 1993 at Des Moines and Cedar Rapids.

By 1995 it appeared Iowa's goal of five nesting pairs would not be realized without further releases. Therefore, the Iowa Peregrine Falcon Recovery Team was formed, and an additional 117 falcons were released at Mason City, Bluffton, Effigy Mounds, Dubuque, Louisa Generating Station, and Palo Generating Facility.

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In Iowa 169 falcons were hacked between 1989 and 2003. Since the first nest in 1993, 167 young have been produced in Iowa.

In 2007 there were 226 territorial pairs, while 163 successful pairs produced 443 young in the Midwest that included Ontario, Manitoba, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky, and Iowa.

The new population may be larger than the original because of the new ecological niches provided by tall building in cities, smokestacks, and bridges.

Of the 13 Iowa nesting territories in 2008, five were on buildings, three on smokestacks, three on bridges, one on cliffs, and one has alternated between cliff and smokestack.

The ultimate goal is to sustain a peregrine population vigorous enough to ensure its survival and ultimately reoccupy its historical breeding range, wherever that is feasible.

This will require maintaining population levels which are large enough to be secure from stochastic events, and with enough genetic variation to allow for adaptive response to ongoing natural selection.

Productivity of about 1.0 young per territorial pair is considered sufficient to sustain a stable peregrine population.

In 2008 Iowa had 13 territories with 8 successful pairs producing 20 young (1.5 young per territorial pair, 2.5 per successful pair). From 2004 – 2008 (2004 was first year of 10 nesting pairs) productivity was 1.6 young per territorial pair, and 2.7 per successful pair.

In 2007 Minnesota had 51 territories with 35 successful pairs fledging 94 young. In Wisconsin there were 32 territories, 28 successful pairs produced 82 young.

The Peregrine Falcon population in Iowa, as well as the upper Midwest, has become large enough and is reproducing at a rate where it will eventually reach its carrying capacity without further supplementation by hacking of captive-produced birds.

On August 25, 1999, the peregrine falcon, one of the first species to be protected under the Endangered Species Act was officially declared recovered and removed from the federal endangered species list. This was based on the status of the species throughout its range in the United States. The continued population increase in Iowa since 1999 now allows for the upgrading of the peregrine from endangered to special concern at the state level.