

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus



Photo by Christy Klinger

Habitat Use Profile

Habitats Used in Nevada	
Cliffs (Mojave Lowland Riparian) (Mojave Scrub) (Marsh)	
Key Habitat Parameters ◐	
Plant Composition and Density	Does not have strong vegetation preferences
Mosaic	Many habitat types flown or foraged over, but always near cliffs or elevated nesting sites and suitable prey populations ¹¹
Distance to Water	Usually breeds in proximity to a water body ⁴
Prey Populations	Presence of suitable avian prey base required
Cliff Properties	Usually 12 – 200 m [40 – 640 ft] tall, mean height 100 m [330 ft] tall, with ledges ~ 1/3 down, usually oriented to north or west ^{11, E0} ; some overhead cover preferred ¹¹
Area Requirements ◐	
Minimum Patch Size	~ 400 km ² [100,000 ac] ^{E0}
Recommended Patch Size	> 1,200 km ² [300,000 ac] ^{E0}
Home Range	Typically 300 – 1,500 km ² [75,000 – 375,000 ac], but varies greatly with prey abundance; typically forages ~ 10 km [6 mi] from nest site ¹¹

Conservation Profile

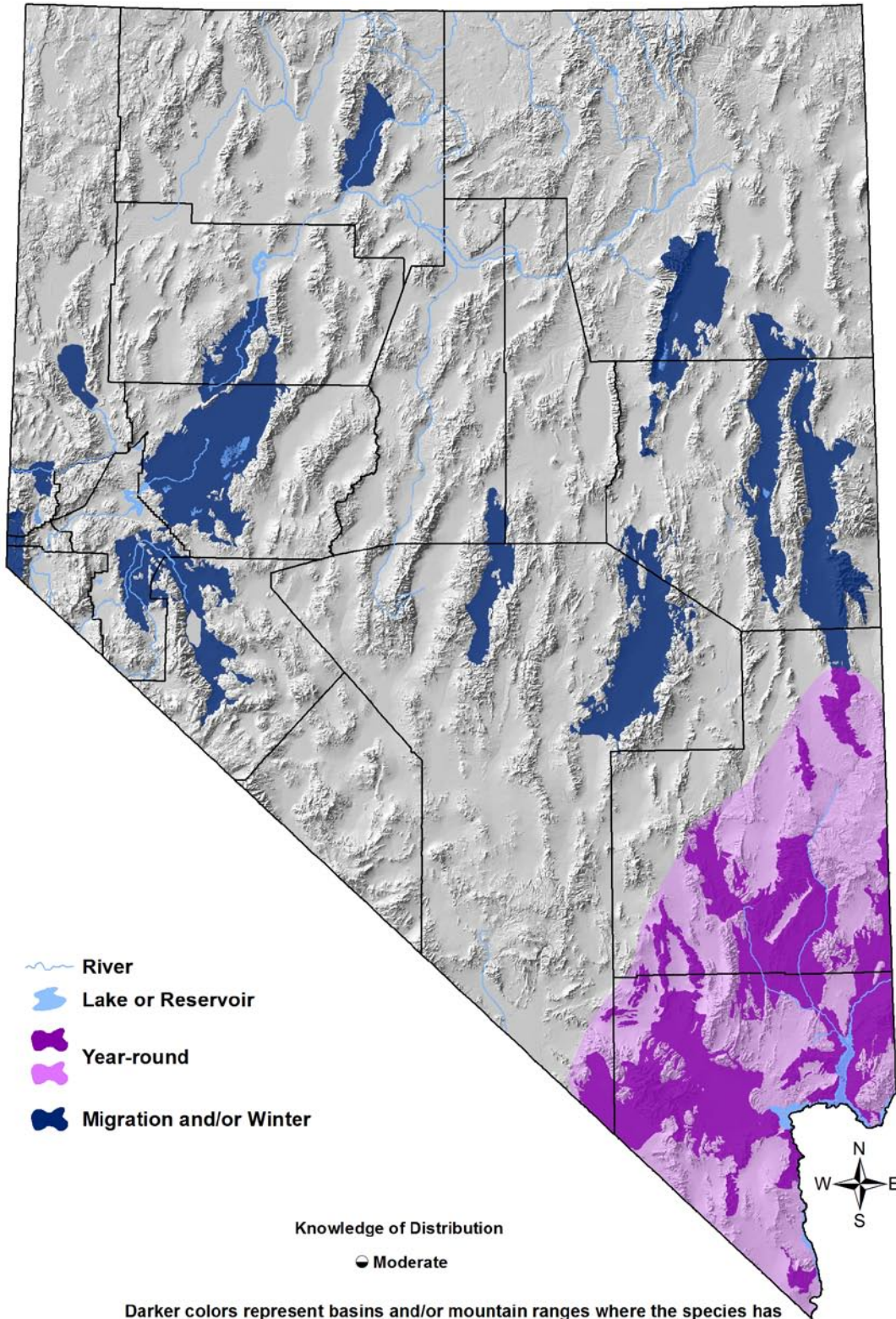
Priority Status	
Special Status Species	
Species Concerns	
Historical declines	
Other Rankings	
Continental PIF	Stewardship Species
Audubon Watchlist	None
NV Natural Heritage	G4, S2
USFWS	ESA De-listed, Bird of Conservation Concern, Migratory Bird
BLM	Sensitive Species
USFS	Sensitive Species
NDOW	Conservation Priority
Trends	
Historical ◐	Historical declines, with very large declines in 1950s - 1970s ¹¹
Recent ◐	Stable or increasing ¹¹
Population Size Estimates	
Nevada ◐	140-180 ^{E0}
Global ◐	340,000 ⁹
Percent of Global	< 1%
Population Objective	
Maintain / Increase ^{10, E0}	
Monitoring Coverage	
Source	NDOW and Lake Mead NRA surveys
Coverage in NV	Good
Key Conservation Areas	
Protection	Lake Mead NRA
Restoration	Areas with depleted prey base near suitable cliffs

Natural History Profile

Seasonal Presence in Nevada	
Year-round in Lake Mead area; Summer – Spring and/or Migration elsewhere	
Known Breeding Dates in Nevada	
Late Feb – July ^{E0}	
Nest and Nesting Habits	
Nest Placement	Cliffs or building ledges ¹¹
Site Fidelity	High ¹¹
Other	See Cliff Properties in Habitat Use Profile
Food Habits	
Basic	Aerial predator
Primary Diet	Mid- to small-sized birds ¹¹
Secondary Diet	Occasionally bats or other mammals ¹¹

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Darker colors represent basins and/or mountain ranges where the species has been recorded within the past 12 years. Lighter colors represent the broader area within which the species is presumed to occur in appropriate habitat types.

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Overview

The Peregrine Falcon is a flagship species of avian conservation, and is among the largest and most successful species recovery effort of the Endangered Species Act.² After the near-extinction caused by widespread use of eggshell-thinning DDT and other chlorinated hydrocarbons in the 1950s – 1970s, Peregrine Falcons recovered sufficiently to be removed from the Endangered Species List in 1999.

After a period of absence, the Peregrine Falcon was rediscovered in Nevada when a breeding pair was detected along the cliffs of Lake Mead in 1985. An ongoing natural recolonization was then augmented by NDOW's reintroduction of 48 birds between 1988 and 1993.⁷ At present, Peregrine Falcons in Nevada are concentrated around the Lake Mead NRA, where they nest on earthen and rock cliffs surrounding the reservoir. This apparent Mojave Desert orientation of the species, however, is at least partly an artifact of an incomplete recovery that is presumably being driven by colonizers from the south.¹¹ Historical breeding occurred throughout a greater portion of Nevada, and some of this former breeding range could eventually be reoccupied. Indeed, new territories are discovered in southern Nevada each year, progressively farther away from the core Lake Mead population center. Populations in northern California are doing very well and may be a source for new dispersal into western Nevada.⁶ In summer of 2003, a nesting pair was observed in the White Pine Range in eastern Nevada, and in 2009, four young were fledged in Lincoln County.^{7, (C. Klinger pers. comm.)} Marshes and nearby uplands throughout much of the state are already used as foraging sites by migrating falcons. Migrant population counts have also increased in the Goshute Mountains (1983-2001).⁵ Given this pattern of expansion, the range map shown above (which currently indicates no breeding in the Great Basin portion of Nevada) may well require revision in the future.

The species remains closely monitored, and many species protection measures are in place.¹⁰ Key conservation needs are protecting known nesting locations from excessive disturbances and maintaining sufficient avian prey populations. Conserving marshes may also benefit migrating Peregrine Falcons. The Peregrine Falcon is a Covered Species in the Clark County MSHCP³, and is also covered in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Plan and the Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Abundance and Occupancy by Habitat

The population estimate given in the Conservation Profile Table (140 – 180 birds) is based on approximately 100 known breeding birds detected in 2010, plus an estimated 40 – 80 undetected breeders throughout the state (C. Klinger, *pers. comm.*). The *Nevada Wildlife Action Plan*⁸ reports a lower breeding population (10 nesting pairs), probably based on earlier information.

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Nevada-Specific Studies and Analyses

NDOW and Lake Mead NRA Monitoring Studies

Ongoing monitoring of known breeding territories suggest stable to increasing rates of nest occupancy, success, and productivity in southern Nevada (C. Klinger, *pers. comm.*).

Main Threats and Challenges

Habitat and Other Threats

- As a well-managed recovering species, there are currently no major threats known
- Energy development (wind and solar) may impact foraging areas
- Nest disturbance (i.e. recreational rock climbing), illegal or legal falconry take, or persecution may be localized threats



Recently fledged Peregrine Falcon. Photo by Joe Barnes.

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Conservation Strategies

Established Strategies

- Monitoring of Peregrine Falcons is prescribed by the USFWS' *Monitoring Plan for the American Peregrine Falcon*¹⁰

Habitat Strategies

- The Cliff (p. Hab-4-1) habitat conservation strategy benefits this species
- Manage habitat near known or likely nesting locations and consistently-used migratory sites for avian prey productivity
- Protect known nesting cliffs or structures and adjacent foraging habitat from disturbance

Research, Planning, and Monitoring Strategies

- As a delisted species, the Peregrine Falcon is well-monitored in known breeding range¹⁰; however other monitoring programs should be primed to document breeding range expansions, should they occur
- Conduct exploratory surveys for new breeding activity. A call-playback protocol developed under the Clark County MSHCP specifically for Peregrine Falcons may be ideal for this purpose (J. Barnes *pers. comm.*)
- Conduct research to determine the presence of preferred habitat characteristics in areas distant from current high-quality breeding areas near water

Public Outreach Strategies

- Encourage seasonal closures of recreational climbing routes near known nest locations on managed lands

References: ¹Blancher, unpublished PIF data; ²Cade et al. (1988); ³Clark County (2000); ⁴Herron et al. (1985); ⁵Hoffman and Smith (2003); ⁶Kauffman et al. (2004); ⁷NDOW (2010); ⁸Nevada Wildlife Action Plan Team (2006); ⁹Rich et al. (2004); ¹⁰U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2003); ¹¹White et al. (2002), ^{E0}Expert opinion

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Peregrine Falcon nesting cliffs, Grand Wash, southern Nevada. Photo by Joe Barnes.