

PEREGRINE FALCON FACT CARD

Physical description

- The peregrine is the largest British breeding falcon. It is 38–48 cm long, and its wingspan is 95–110 cm.
- The female is considerably larger than the male – as much as one-third larger – which is why males are called tiercels (which means third).
- The upper parts are dark blue-grey, and the under parts are pale with fine, dark bars.
- The head has a black 'hood' with black moustache-like markings on the face.
- Juvenile birds are browner than adults and are heavily streaked underneath.



Where do they live?

- Peregrines can be found on all continents apart from the Arctic and Antarctica.
- They can live in a wide variety of habitats, including wide open spaces, the coast and moorlands.
- Some peregrines live in urban areas (around 10 cities and towns in the UK) and set up nests on anything from chimneys to cathedrals to electricity pylons. These offer the same height and safety as their more typical crag and cliff nest sites.

Breeding

- Peregrines do not construct nests. Instead, they lay their eggs either directly on the surface of the nesting structure or in a shallow, unlined scrape that holds small rocks or dirt.
- Typically, two to four eggs are laid at two to three-day intervals but incubation doesn't start until the clutch is complete, so eggs hatch around the same day.
- Peregrines can have second clutches if the first clutch fails.
- At about three weeks old, the chicks begin to walk and jump around the nest.
- As the chicks grow, the female also begins to hunt and both adults present the young with prey.
- When they are about 40 days old they are able to fly but they stay close to the nest site.
- They are dependent on the adults for an additional two months.

Diet

- City-dwelling peregrines generally feed on pigeons and starlings, while peregrines living on the coast or near estuaries feed on wading birds and ducks.
- A hunting peregrine dives with amazing speed towards its prey, striking the bird with such force that it is often killed upon impact.
- This act, called a stoop, is what makes the peregrine falcon the world's fastest animal, capable of flying at speeds of 180 km per hour!