Species Status Assessment

Common Name: Peregrine falcon **Date Updated:** March 13, 2025

Scientific Name: *Falco peregrinus* **Updated By:** Amy Mahar

Class: Aves

Family: Falconidae

Species Synopsis *(a short paragraph which describes species taxonomy, distribution, recent trends, and habitat in New York):*

Peregrine falcons, having become extirpated in the United States in the 1950s, have made an astonishing recovery across the range and in New York where breeding resumed in 1983. The ban on DDT in the early 1970s and a widespread reintroduction program (in which more than 6,000 birds were released) allowed populations to return to some historic breeding sites and even expand into new areas. In New York breeding occurs on bridges, towers, and buildings in urban settings as well as on cliff habitats in the Adirondack Mountains and vicinity.

The NYSDEC's annual survey of peregrine falcons documented 72 territorial pairs in 2013 and 52 successful pairs, which fledged a total of 122 young. In 2023, the annual survey documented 65 occupied territories. The second Breeding Bird Atlas documented an increase in blocks with confirmed breeding records from four in 1980-85 to 68 in 2000-05. Similar increases have been documented in all adjacent states and Vermont has removed the species from its endangered species list.

I. Status

a. Current legal protected Status

i. **Federal:** Not listed **Candidate:** No

ii. **New York:** Endangered

b. Natural Heritage Program

i. **Global:** G4 – Apparently Secure

ii. **New York:** S3B – Vulnerable Breeding Population **Tracked by NYNHP?:** Yes

Other Ranks:

- The peregrine falcon was removed from the Federal Endangered Species List in 1999.

-New York 2025 SGCN status: Species of Greatest Conservation Need

-COSEWIC: Not listed in Canada

-IUCN Red List: Least Concern (2021)

-NE Regional SGCN: Watchlist (Assessment Priority)

Status Discussion:

Once extirpated as a breeder in New York, the peregrine falcon is now a local breeder. It is a resident bird in the New York City area and in some upstate areas including Albany and Buffalo. Peregrines are a fairly common fall migrant on the outer coast and rare inland (Levine 1998).

II. Abundance and Distribution Trends

Region	Present?	Abundance	Distribution	Time Frame	Listing status	SGCN?
North America	Yes	Increasing	Increasing	1990s to present		-
Northeastern US	Yes	Increasing	Increasing	1990s to present	Watchlist	No
New York	Yes	Increasing	Increasing	2000-2023	Endangered, S3B	Yes
Connecticut	Yes	Increasing	Increasing	2005-2015	Threatened, S1B	Yes
Massachusetts	Yes	Increasing	Increasing	Since breeding resumed in 1987	Special Concern, S2B, S3N	Yes
New Jersey	Yes	Stable	Stable		Endangered, S1B, S3N	Yes
Pennsylvania	Yes	Increasing	Increasing	1984-89 to 2004-08	Recovered Species, S1B, S5N, S4M	Yes
Vermont	Yes	Increasing	Increasing	Since early 1990s	Removed in 2005, S3B	Yes
Ontario	Yes	Increasing	Increasing	1981-85 to 2001-05	Special Concern, S4	-
Quebec	Yes	Increasing	Increasing		SNA	-

Column options
Present?: Yes; No; Unknown; No data; (blank) or Choose an Item
Abundance and Distribution: Declining; Increasing; Stable; Unknown; Extirpated; N/A; (blank) or Choose an item
SGCN?: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Monitoring in New York *(specify any monitoring activities or regular surveys that are conducted in New York):*

NYSDEC conducts statewide nesting surveys annually.

Trends Discussion *(insert map of North American/regional distribution and status):*

Range wide short-term trends exhibit an increase of > 10% (NatureServe 2025). Peregrine falcons were believed to breed at 50 locations in New York prior to the 1950s but by the 1960s the species was extirpated as a result of contamination by DDT (Bull 1974) in addition to a lack of enforced protection, falconers retrieving nestlings, and oologists taking eggs. Young captive birds were released in New York mainly from 1974 to 1988 (birds were released in Rochester in 1994). In 1983 nesting resumed on two bridges in New York City. Two breeding pairs returned to the Adirondacks in 1985. The first Breeding Bird Atlas documents these four breeding locations.

The second Breeding Bird Atlas (2000-05) documented an incredibly expanded population, showing confirmed breeding in 68 blocks statewide, a 1,600% increase in breeding. The

NYSDEC's 2013 annual report on peregrine falcons states that the population continues to increase, with a total of 72 territorial pairs in 2013.

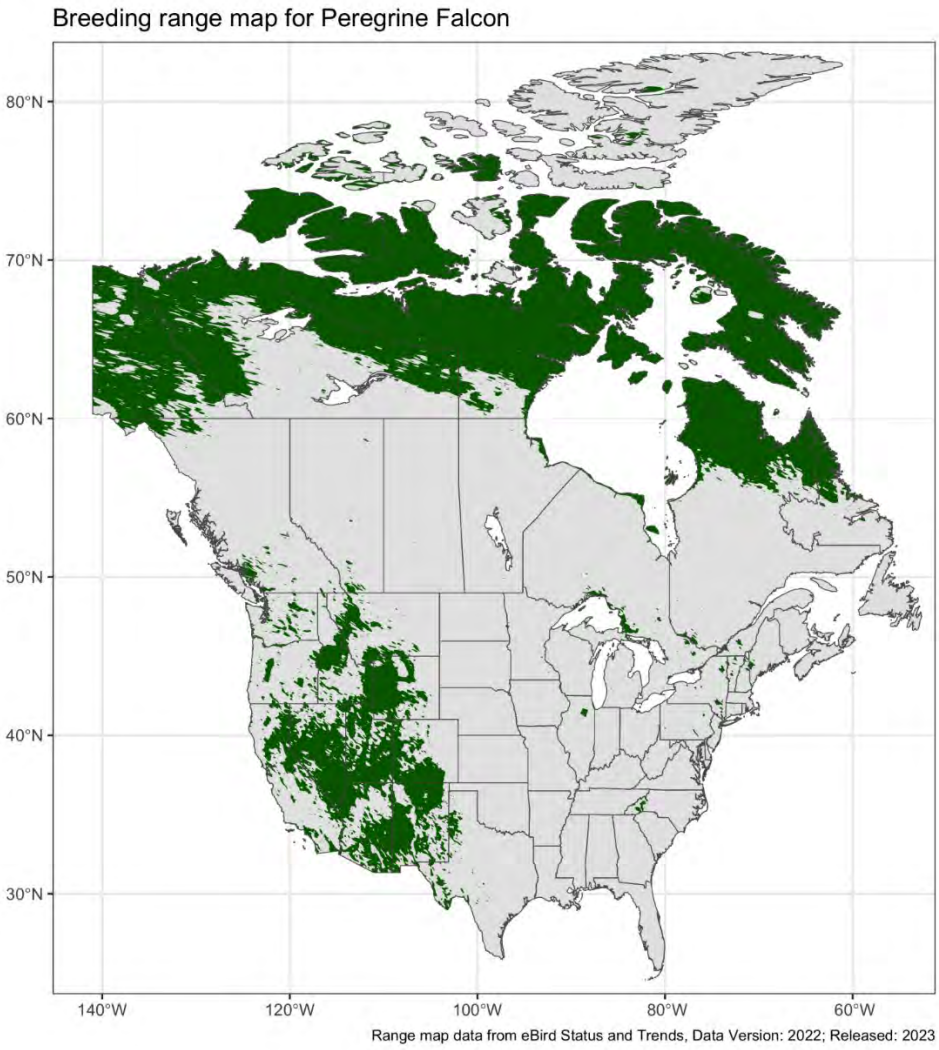

Figure 1: Breeding range of peregrine falcon (eBird).

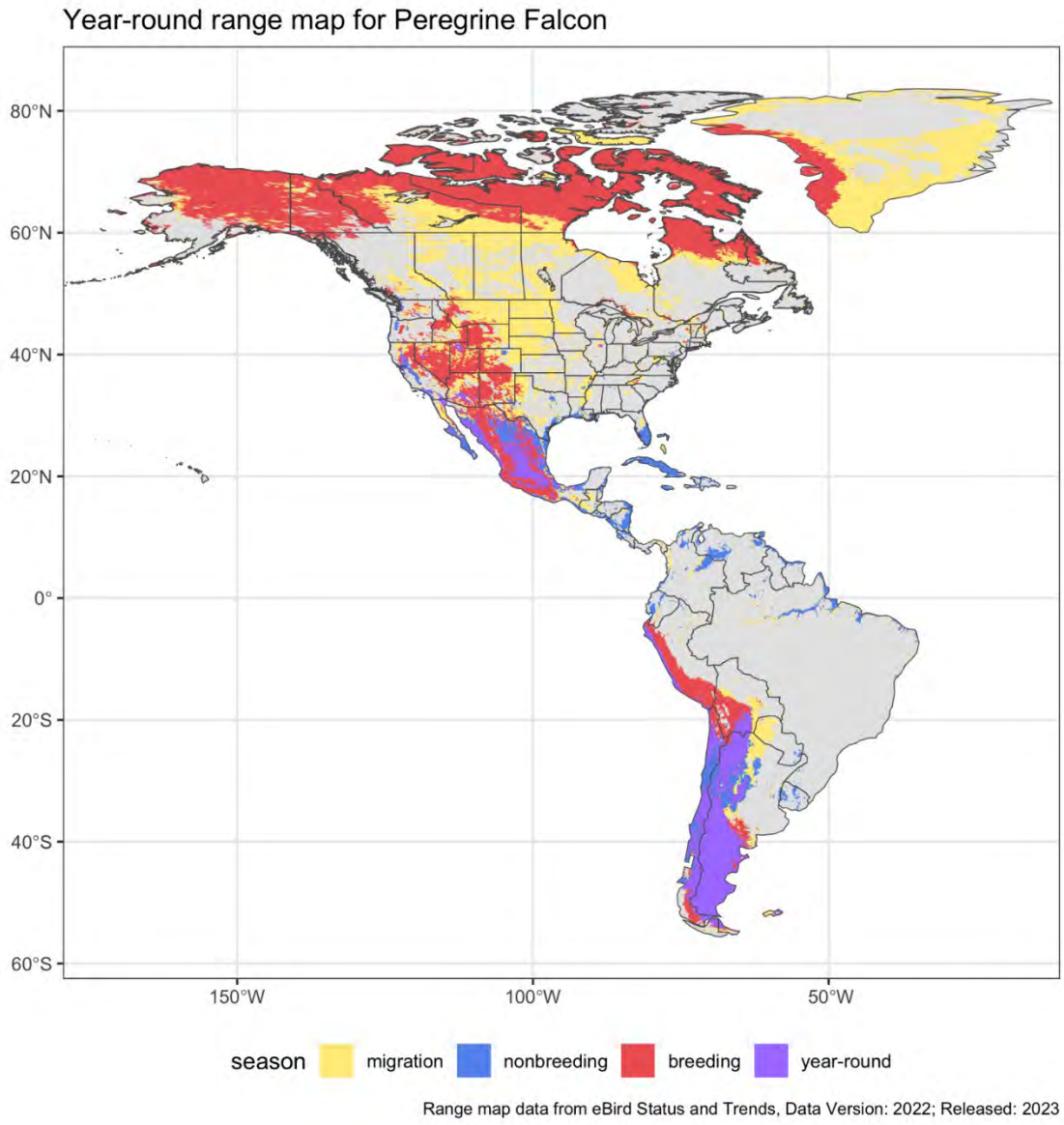

Figure 2: Full (year-round) range of peregrine falcon (eBird).

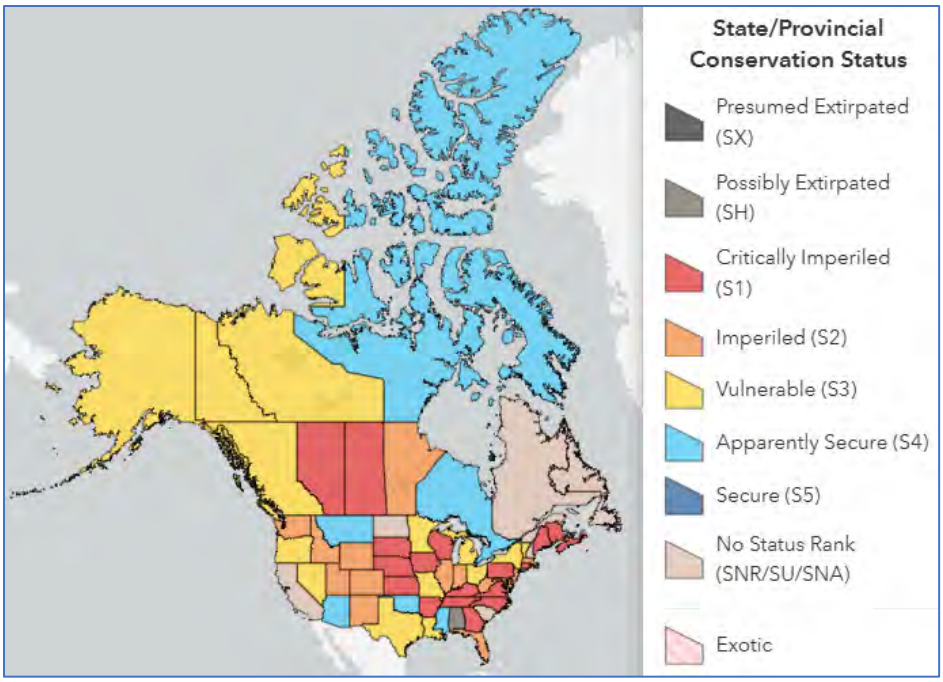

Figure 3: Peregrine falcon conservation status by state (NatureServe 2025).

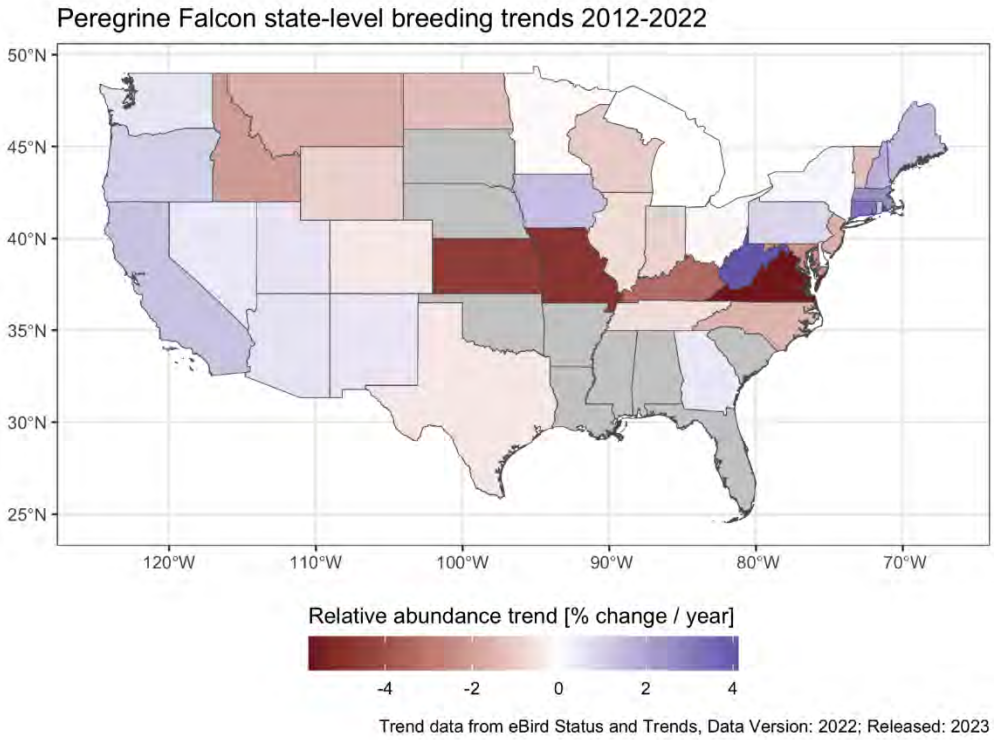

Figure 4: Trends, by state, of peregrine falcon (eBird).

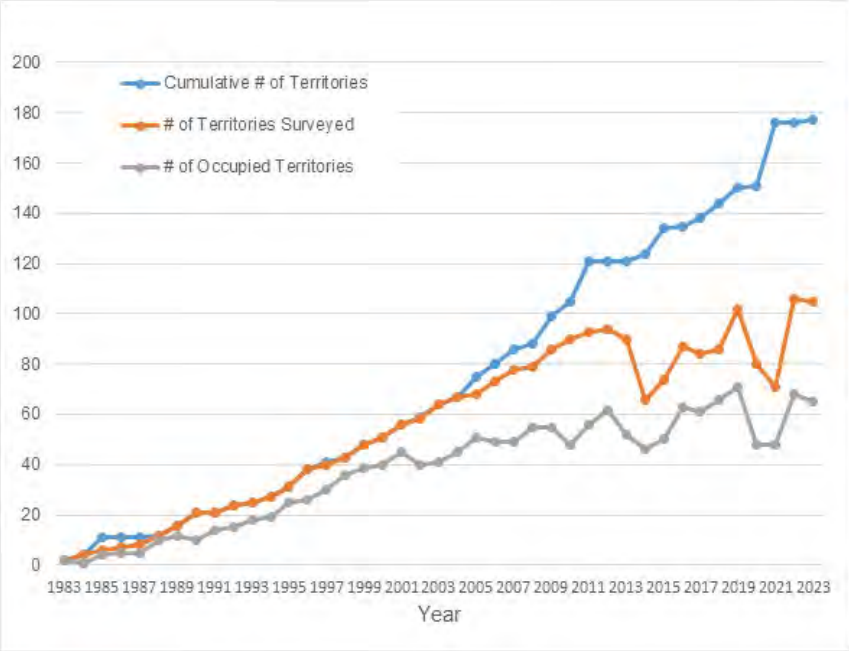

Figure 5. Totals of surveyed territories, occupied territories, and cumulative territories of peregrine falcons (Falco peregrinus) surveyed in New York from 1983-2023 (Palumbo 2023).

III. New York Rarity *(provide map, numbers, and percent of state occupied)*

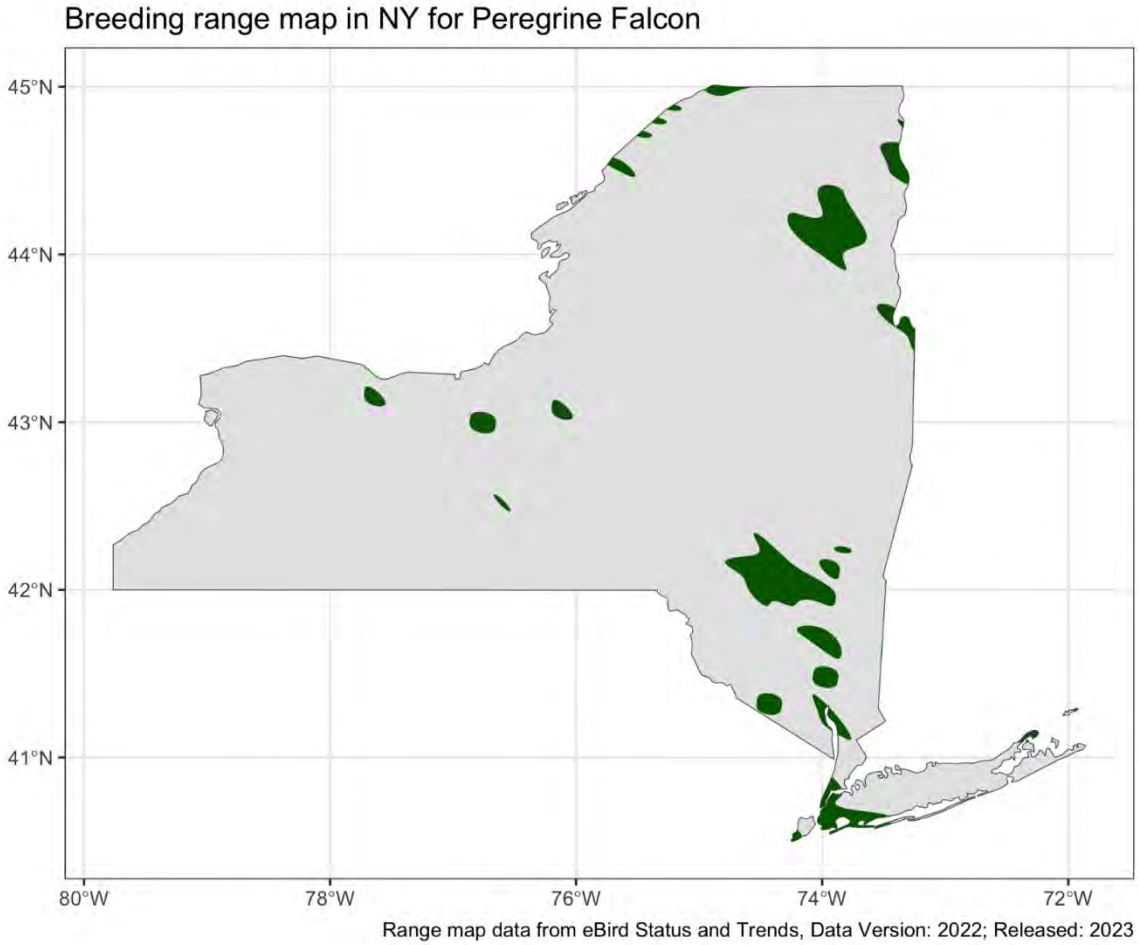

Figure 6: NYS breeding range of peregrine falcon (eBird).

Details of historic and current occurrence:

About 50 pairs of breeding peregrine falcons were thought to be present in New York before the 1950s, mostly in the Adirondacks, but also on some bridges and buildings. The last known successful breeding was in 1956 and the last known breeding attempt—an unmated adult at a nest—was in 1961 (Bull 1974). Breeding resumed in 1983.

The first Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) (1980-85) documented occupancy in 17 blocks, 0.3% of the survey blocks statewide, four of which included confirmed breeding (Andrle and Carroll 1988). The second BBA (2000-05) documented occupancy in 111 blocks, 2.1% of the survey blocks statewide, 68 of which had Confirmed breeding. (McGowan and Corwin 2008). Statewide occupancy increased by 553% and Confirmed breeding increased by 1,600%. In 2013, the NYSDEC reported 72 territorial pairs statewide (36 upstate, 36 downstate). A total of 122 young were fledged by 52 successful pairs. In 2023, the annual survey documented 65 occupied territories.

The third BBA (2020-25) is currently underway and utilizes a different number and layout of survey blocks across New York, making direct comparison with the first two Atlases difficult. There were

5,333 blocks in the first and second BBAs, and there are 5,710 blocks in the current BBA, of which 1,815 are considered priority blocks. To date, peregrine falcon has been documented in 178 priority blocks, 3.5% of all priority blocks statewide during the third BBA (NY BBA III Overview, 2024).

Peregrine falcons breed in the New York City area and northward along the Hudson River where every major bridge as far north as Troy hosts a breeding pair. Nests are known in other urban areas as well, including Niagara Falls, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Binghamton, Albany, and Troy. Nesting also occurs in the Adirondack Mountains, eastern Adirondack Foothills, Champlain Valley, the Shawangunk and Catskill mountains, and the Hudson River Palisades. In recent years peregrine falcons have extended their range to include breeding throughout Long Island on buildings, bridges, and in coastal marshland.

New York's Contribution to Species North American Range:

Based on eBird data, 0.03 percent of the population breeds in New York, while 0.13 percent of the non-breeding population occurs in New York. Among all states with breeding populations, New York ranks 15 of 24.

Percent of North American Range in NY	Classification of NY Range	Distance to core population, if not in NY
1-25%	Core	

Column options
Percent of North American Range in NY: 100% (endemic); 76-99%; 51-75%; 26-50%; 1-25%; 0%; Choose an item
Classification of NY Range: Core; Peripheral; Disjunct; (blank) or Choose an item

IV. Primary Habitat or Community Type *(from NY crosswalk of NE Aquatic, Marine, or Terrestrial Habitat Classification Systems):*

NY Natural Heritage Communities: Calcareous cliff community, Cliff community, Red cedar rocky summit, Shale cliff and talus community, Urban structure exterior

1. Cliff and Talus
2. Commercial/Industrial and Residential
3. Freshwater Marsh
4. Floodplain Forests
5. Riparian
6. Coastal Marshland

Habitat or Community Type Trend in New York

Habitat Specialist?	Indicator Species?	Habitat/ Community Trend	Time frame of Decline/Increase
Yes	Yes	Stable	

Column options
Habitat Specialist and Indicator Species: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item
Habitat/Community Trend: Declining; Stable; Increasing; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Habitat Discussion:

Peregrine Falcons often nest on ledges or holes on the faces of rocky cliffs. They will also nest on humanmade structures such as bridges and tall buildings, especially near or in urban areas. Wintering birds frequent buildings, towers, and steeples in urban areas, and open areas with plentiful prey in more natural settings.

Various open situations from tundra, moorlands, steppe, and seacoasts, especially where there are suitable nesting cliffs, to mountains, open forested regions, and human population centers (AOU 1983). When not breeding, occurs in areas where prey concentrate, including farmlands, marshes, lakeshores, river mouths, tidal flats, dunes and beaches, broad river valleys, cities, and airports. Often nests on ledge or hole on face of rocky cliff or crag. River banks, tundra mounds, open bogs, large stick nests of other species, tree hollows, and man-made structures (e.g., ledges of city buildings) are used locally (Cade 1982). Nests typically are situated on ledges of vertical rocky cliffs, commonly with a sheltering overhang (Palmer 1988, Campbell et al 1990). Tundra populations nests typically on rocky cliffs, bluffs, or dirt banks. Ideal locations include undisturbed areas with a wide view, near water, and close to plentiful prey. Substitute man-made sites include tall buildings, bridges, rock quarries, and raised platforms. See Grebence and White (1989) for information on nesting along the Colorado River system.

V. Species Demographic, and Life History:

Breeder in NY?	Non-breeder in NY?	Migratory Only?	Summer Resident?	Winter Resident?	Anadromous/ Catadromous?
Yes	(blank)	No	Yes	Yes	Choose an item.

Column options
First 5 fields: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item
Anadromous/Catadromous: Anadromous; Catadromous; (blank) or Choose an item

Species Demographics and Life History Discussion *(include information about species life span, reproductive longevity, reproductive capacity, age to maturity, and ability to disperse and colonize):*

Peregrine falcons breed annually. Age at first breeding varies, depending on territory availability, which is in turn influenced by floater competition and breeder turnover. Females tend to breed a year earlier than males (Cade and Fyfe 1978, Ratcliffe 1993). Yearling females are more likely to breed than yearling males, although both sexes have bred successfully as yearlings (Wendt and Septon 1991, C. Nadareski, pers. comm.). First-year survival is not well known but generally assumed to be 40–50% of fledglings. In urban environments, the mortality rate is higher at 60-70+% during the first-year of life (C. Nadareski, pers. comm.). The annual mortality rate for sub-adults and adults is approximately 12% (The Peregrine Fund). Maximum longevity records for banded birds range from 16 to 20 years.

Annual breeding success in New York in 2013 was 2.3 young produced per successful breeding pair and reached a high of 3.7 young per successful nest in New York City in 1993 (NYSDEC 1994). The average annual breeding success in the past ten years is 2.4 young per successful breeding pair. In reintroduced eastern populations, natal dispersal of 29 females ranged from 0 to 752 km, with 18 (62%) >100 km; for 13 males, 0–1,117 km, with 8 (62%) >100 km (Barclay 1995). Female generally disperses farther than male from natal localities to breed.

Fledglings at cliffs may be killed prior to independence by other raptors, especially great horned owls and golden eagles, occasionally by mammalian predators, and they may also suffer disease and accidents. Other cliff-related causes of mortality may be a result of cliff-ledge flooding during the spring season (C. Nadareski, pers. comm.). Urban fledglings may have greater variety of post-fledging fatalities than fledglings in natural landscapes; deaths primarily from collisions with automobiles, windows, buildings, and other human-made objects (e.g., cables, wires, and barbed wire fencing), falling into chimneys and air ducts, and drowning after falling from bridges (Cade and Bird 1990, Sweeney et al. 1997). Some of the urban fledgling mortality can be attributed to human

disturbance causing premature flight (C. Nadareski, pers. comm.). Additional causes of urban fledgling fatalities have been attributed to avian diseases transmitted by feral pigeons (e.g., trichomoniasis or frounce, and herpesvirus), West Nile virus, lead poisoning, and organochlorine pesticides (e.g., chlordane, dieldrin, DDE, and PCBs) (NYS Wildlife Health Unit). Collisions also affect older age classes; in nonurban environments, face a variety of human-related hazards, including electrocution by utility lines, wire and fence collisions, shooting, and airplane strikes (Barclay and Cade 1983, Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group unpubl.). In urban environments, causes of sub-adult and adult mortality also include trichomoniasis, organochlorine pesticides (as noted above), shooting, collisions with vehicles, and territorial battles (C. Nadareski, pers. comm.).

VI. Threats *(from NY 2015 SWAP or newly described):*

Pairs vary greatly in responsiveness to human activities, depending partly on individual characteristics, partly on period of breeding cycle, and partly on environmental circumstances (Cade 1960). Pairs in remote locations are generally most reactive; those in urban areas or frequently visited sites become habituated to close human activities but are still susceptible to failure if disturbed at critical times. Rock-climbing, activity of researchers, or necessary maintenance at eyries is not usually detrimental when reasonable precautions are taken, but constant relationship-tending is necessary between people involved in these activities and resource managers.

Urban-dwelling peregrines may be killed or injured by flying into windows or other features of buildings while chasing prey, occasionally by collision with moving vehicles, including aircraft at airports; sometimes strike wires; recently fledged young sometimes fall down chimneys or are killed by air-conditioning equipment or other machinery on tops of buildings; young in nests on bridges often fall into water, significantly reducing productivity at such sites (Barclay and Cade 1983, Cade and Bird 1990, Bell et al. 1996). Premature fledging or falling due to human disturbance at urban nest sites continues to be an important issue. Human activities such as required inspections, ongoing or onset of new construction, security inspections, routine maintenance such as replacement of avian lighting, and general human curiosity have been documented at building(s) and bridge(s) locations (C. Nadareski, pers. comm.).

Peregrines are occasionally killed by eating birds poisoned by strychnine or other persistent toxic chemicals (see Porter et al. 1987) and from lead (primarily from chips of paint on bridges and buildings).

Details on causes of mortality and injury to urban peregrines are included in the discussion above under Species Demographics and Life History. A review of a sampling of 81 urban-dwelling peregrines from 2001 through mid-2013 (the majority of data collected within the past 5 years) shows the following causes of death or injury: vehicle strikes (24), avian diseases (5), building strikes (15), unknown impacts (11), airplane strikes (3), lead poisoning (3), pesticide poisoning (3), shooting (2), drowning (2), and other (2). This results in an additional threat, mortality from organochlorine pesticides. Data provided by The Port Authority on band recoveries from peregrines struck by aircraft at John F. Kennedy International Airport included 13 banded peregrine falcons, three of which were banded in New York. The balance were banded in Pennsylvania (4), Massachusetts (1), and at an unknown origin (5).

Threat Level 1	Threat Level 2	Threat Level 3	Spatial Extent	Severity	Immediacy	Trend	Certainty
6. Human Intrusions & Disturbance	6.1 Recreational Activities	6.1.3 Recreational use of cliffs and rock faces	Restricted	Moderate	Immediate	Stable and ongoing	Choose an item.
6. Human Intrusions & Disturbance	6.1 Recreational Activities	1.3.4 Recreational trails	Restricted	Moderate	Immediate	Stable and ongoing	Choose an item.
1. Residential and Commercial	1.1 Housing & Urban Areas	1.1.1 Dense housing & urban areas	Large	Serious	Near-term	Stable and ongoing	Choose an item.
4. Transportation & Service Corridors	4.2 Utility & Service Lines	4.2.1 Power & service lines	Restricted	Serious	Immediate	Stable and ongoing	Choose an item.
4. Transportation & Service Corridors	4.4 Flight Paths	4.4.1 Flight paths	Small	Extreme	Immediate	Intensifying	Choose an item.
9. Pollution	9.2 Industrial & Military Effluents	9.2.4 PCB	Large	Moderate	Long-term	Stable and ongoing	Choose an item.
9. Pollution	9.3 Agricultural & Forestry Effluents	9.3.3 Herbicides & pesticides	Large	Moderate	Near-term	Stable and ongoing	Choose an item.
5. Biological Resource Use	5.1 Hunting & Collecting Terrestrial Animals	5.1.4 Poaching/persecution of terrestrial animals	Small	Serious	Unknown	Intensifying	Choose an item.
11. Climate Change	11.5 Storms & Severe Weather	11.5.1 Storms & severe weather	Large	Moderate	Near-term	Intensifying	Choose an item.
4. Transportation & Service Corridors	4.1 Roads & Railroads	4.1.1 Roads	Large	Moderate	Immediate	Stable and ongoing	Choose an item.
8. Invasive & Other Problematic Species	8.4 Pathogens	8.4.2 Viral pathogens	Large	Serious	Immediate	Intensifying	Choose an item.
8. Invasive & Other Problematic Species	8.4 Pathogens	8.4.4 Worm-induced disease	Restricted	Moderate	Immediate	Stable and ongoing	Choose an item.

Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?

Yes: X **No: _____** **Unknown: _____**

If yes, describe mechanism and whether adequate to protect species/habitat:

The peregrine falcon is included in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. 703-712) and is protected as a native species under the NYS Environmental Conservation Law. It also receives additional protections as a species listed as Endangered in New York State and is protected by Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) section 11-0535 and the New York Code of Rules and Regulations (6 NYCRR Part 182). A permit is required for any proposed project that may result in a take of a species listed as Threatened or Endangered, including, but not limited to, actions that may kill or harm individual animals or result in the adverse modification, degradation or destruction of habitat occupied by the listed species. This listing status provides vital protection from human disturbance such as rock-climbing, necessary bridge maintenance, and building roof repairs and façade maintenance, and airport operations during critical times of the breeding season.

Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:

To ensure this species' continued success, NYSDEC stresses the need to build and foster partnerships with countless agencies, bridge authorities, building owners, and individuals who remain essential to the protection and management of this species. The majority of sites would probably not be successful without proactive management due to the need to restrict activity during critical periods of the breeding season. Seasonal cliff closures are necessary at some sites to ensure nesting success and bridge maintenance must be scheduled carefully.

Action Category	Action	Description
A.1 Direct Habitat Management	A.1.0.0.0 Direct habitat management	Site/Area management peregrine falcons
B.3 Outreach	B.3.1.3 Targeted communication	Communication with landowners and property managers to ensure access to nest boxes and establish best management strategies
B.3 Outreach	B.3.1.4.0 Public outreach and information	Awareness & Communications
B.5 Economic and Other Incentives	B.5.4.3 Reward the value of ecological services	Reward the value of ecological services through work with landowners and managers

C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.2 Conserve specific land or seascapes	Protection through acquisition or easement
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.3 Complementary or alternative conservation measures	Protection registry and/or working with local, state, and federal government on issues relating to zoning and development
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.5.0.0 Conservation planning	-Site/Area protection -Resource/Habitat Protection
C.8 Research and Monitoring	C.8.1 Basic research and status monitoring	Monitor breeding population to detect trends
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.5.1.3 Develop and Implement a conservation, management, or restoration plan for protected private lands	Habitat/Natural process restoration
C.7 Legislative and Regulatory Framework or Tools	C.7.1.0.0 Create, amend, or influence legislation, regulation, or codes	Policies and Regulations

Table 2. Recommended conservation actions for peregrine falcon

The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (NYSDEC 2005) includes recommendations for the following actions for peregrine falcon.

Development rights/Easement acquisition:
____ Pursue conservation easements or outright purchase of essential peregrine falcon habitats.

Educational signs:
____ Develop signs/displays and post where appropriate in essential habitat areas to inform the public of the need to protect the species and limit disturbance.

Fact sheet:
____ Develop materials and post where appropriate in essential habitat areas to inform the public of the need to protect the species and limit disturbance.

Habitat management:
____ Review and comment on any plans to ensure that any proposed actions would not be detrimental to essential peregrine falcon habitat or its use. Place nest boxes on bridges and buildings where appropriate, and maintain and replace as necessary. Promote the construction of nesting towers where appropriate.

Habitat monitoring:
____ Review and comment on any plans to ensure that any proposed actions would not be detrimental to essential peregrine falcon habitat or its use.

Habitat research:
____ Conduct radio-telemetry studies as well as field observations to determine essential peregrine falcon habitat.

Life history research:
____ Through population monitoring and banding, determine site-fidelity, turnover, migration and wintering movements, home-ranges, mortality, longevity, etc. of peregrine falcons.

Other action:
____ Ensure that all new peregrine falcon information is submitted to the Natural Heritage /BCD database.

Other management plan:

____ Prepare individual management plans as necessary.

Population monitoring:

____ Annually monitor and determine the number of territorial peregrine falcons and their reproductive outcome. Collect failed eggs and carcasses for analysis. Rehabilitate injured birds for release when possible.

____ Gather wintering information when possible.

State land unit management plan:

____ Ensure needs of peregrine falcons are incorporated into all UMPs where suitable habitat may occur.

Statewide baseline survey:

____ Annually monitor and determine the number of territorial peregrine falcons and their reproductive outcome.

Web page:

____ Keep the webpage current.

Additional recommendations for 2015 SWAP (C. Nadareski):

- Develop annual public relations between the state and property owners of the nest box location to assure access for monitoring and protection of the habitat.
- Life history research should include investigation of diet
- Population monitoring should include the following: Rehabilitation of young released into the wild should include captive hacking to assure successful fledging. Band all nestlings hatched in urban locations where possible to assure return of rehabilitated young back to nest sites.
- Distribute NYSDEC and cooperator contact information to facility management at urban nest sites including detailed protocol to wildlife rehabilitators throughout the state.

VII. References

This SSA drew heavily from these resources:

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