



giving  
nature  
a home

**Name:**

**Peregrine**



## History

The relationship between peregrines and humans goes back thousands of years. Because of their speed and the fact they are easy to tame, people used them for falconry to catch food.

Despite this, they also killed wild peregrines and by the 1930s, there were only about 700 pairs left in the UK. More were killed during World War II, to stop them hunting the homing pigeons that carried important messages.

The number of peregrines hit an all-time low of only 360 pairs in the 1960s because of pesticides used in farming, which got into their bodies when they ate poisoned prey. This caused peregrines to lay eggs with very thin and fragile shells that broke far too early. Once these chemicals were banned and better laws were brought in to protect peregrines from illegal capture and egg collecting their numbers began to increase.

## What is special about this bird?

Peregrines are the fastest birds on the planet and can dive (stoop) at speeds of over 100 miles per hour (mph). The fastest stoop ever recorded (of a captive bird) was 240mph.

## General info

**Scientific name:** *Falco peregrinus*

**Size:** An average of 42cm in length, with a wingspan of 1m (the average armspan of a 9-year-old child is 1.3m).

**Weight:** Females weigh up to 1.1kg; but males only weigh about 670g.

**Where they live:** Most peregrines used to live on the rocky western coasts and in northern areas of the UK, but they now also nest on tall buildings in many UK cities and in other man-made sites, like quarries.

**How long they live:** Typically, peregrines live up to six years. The oldest recorded bird was still going strong at the age of 21 years and 10 months.

**What they eat:** A variety of birds – mostly feral pigeons, starlings and ducks.

**Conservation status:** The number of peregrines is increasing, so they are on our Green List.

## Fascinating fact

Peregrines don't build nests. They usually find a shallow dip in rocks or scrape out a little dip in soil on a ledge of a cliff. Sometimes they nest on the ledges of buildings.