

I sent Barbara a link to the Kodak web site which covers the Peregrine Falcons that nest high atop Kodak Headquarters every year. This prompted Barbara to send me another story of her observations of the world around us.

Flight of the Peregrine

Written by Barbara Spring

Webster's Dictionary:

1. Peregrine\ adj: having a tendency to wander
 2. Peregrine\ n: a swift nearly cosmopolitan falcon that is used much in falconry.
- Peregrination\ n a journey

It is late October. Following her instinct to wander, a young peregrine falcon raised by her parents on a tall building in downtown Detroit flies. She is elegant. Just as other female peregrines, she is one third larger than the male, about the size of a crow, and superbly adapted to preying upon birds on the wing. Like an F-111 fighter, her wings swing back at an angle for supersonic flight. Seeing a sparrow flying far below her, the peregrine folds her wings tight to her body and spiraling through the air she turns upside down homing in on her prey. She reaches speeds of 200 miles per hour and knocks it out of the air. The sparrow never had a chance.

Superbly equipped to prey upon smaller birds, she is one of the fastest, if not the fastest bird in the world yet peregrine falcons nearly became extinct. Once used by kings in the sport of falconry, these birds of prey began to disappear along with eagles and other types of birds because of the widespread use of the pesticide DDT. after World War II.

Endangered because of long lasting poisons, peregrine falcons might have become only a memory if DDT and like pesticides were not banned and if people had not raised the birds in captivity and released them in cities and in wilderness areas after DDT was banned in the 1980's.

May 17, 1993, a newly hatched peregrine falcon chick was found on its nest on the fire escape of the 32nd floor of the Book Building in downtown Detroit. This was the first documented successful nesting of Michigan peregrine falcons in more than 35 years. The same thing was going on in many different places.

Never common in North America, the peregrine requires cliffs to raise their young, therefore skyscrapers or high bridges in large cities provide a place for the birds to dive from as well as an abundant supply of food since pigeons and sparrows have become too numerous in cities.

Another young female falcon released in Detroit flew off. No one knows for sure where she is now.

Today there are peregrine falcons nesting on the power plant stack in Grand Haven, Michigan and on the Kodak Building on Lake Ontario. With grassroots environmental committees and good will, mistakes made in the past can be reversed.

Barbara Spring .
The Dynamic Great Lakes
The Wilderness Within

www.geocities.com/barbaraspring/index