

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Recovery Strategy for the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) in Ontario**

Prepared by the Ontario Peregrine Falcon Recovery Team

The Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) was regulated as endangered in 1978 under Ontario's original *Endangered Species Act*, as a result of a population collapse of the species in the 1950s and 1960s from exposure to dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and its metabolites. There was no evidence of breeding activity by the mid-1960s and Peregrine Falcons were subsequently extirpated from Ontario.

After the restrictions imposed on the use of DDT in the late 1960s and early 1970s in North America and the establishment of a national captive rearing program, a release program was initiated in Ontario in 1977. The Ontario Peregrine Falcon population began to re-establish, and by 1986 one nest site was known in the province. The population has increased every year since that first release. Peregrine Falcons were downlisted from endangered to threatened in Ontario in 2006. This species is listed as threatened on the Species at Risk in Ontario (SARO) List under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA 2007) because of the concern for its small population size, the potential effects of contaminants on it and its sensitivity to human threats and disturbances. The Ontario Peregrine Falcon Recovery Team was formed to develop a recovery strategy to meet the requirements of the ESA 2007.

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) originally evaluated the Peregrine Falcon as three separate subspecies: *anatum* subspecies (endangered in 1978 and threatened in 1999 and in 2000), *tundrius* subspecies (threatened in April 1978 and special concern in April 1992) and *pealei* subspecies (special concern in 1978, 1999 and 2001). The National Peregrine Falcon Recovery Team was established, and a national recovery plan was published in 1988. In 2007, COSEWIC assessed the Peregrine Falcon as two separate units, *pealei* subspecies and *anatum/tundrius* subspecies, and designated the Peregrine Falcon *anatum/tundrius* as special concern in April 2007 (COSEWIC 2007). A nationwide survey of breeding pairs at five-year intervals was initiated in 1970; Ontario has participated in this survey since its inception.

The goal of the Ontario Peregrine Falcon recovery strategy is to ensure a viable and self-sustaining population of this species in Ontario, occupying the full extent of its current and historic range.

The objectives of this recovery strategy are as follows:

1. Identify and protect occupied and potential Peregrine Falcon habitat.
2. Identify and, where feasible, reduce and/or eliminate known threats to the Peregrine Falcon population and habitat in Ontario.

3. Monitor and inventory the population status of and trends related to the Peregrine Falcon through development of a comprehensive monitoring program.
4. Gain a better understanding of the Peregrine Falcon's use of habitat in its current and historic range, and, where feasible, encourage reoccupation of the species' historical habitat in Ontario.
5. Ensure that there is a consistent, comprehensive and up-to-date provincial Peregrine Falcon database so that population recovery and habitat can be monitored, assessed and re-evaluated as required.
6. Maintain and raise public awareness of and promote stewardship of Peregrine Falcons in Ontario.

It is recommended that historical, unoccupied, current and newly discovered cliff nests and nests located on human-created features be regulated as habitat. The nest cliff encompasses the entire cliff face on which the nest scrape is located. The habitat regulation should extend 3 kilometres from the nest cliff of current or newly discovered nests and extend 1 kilometre from the nest cliff of unoccupied and historical nests. The urban Peregrine Falcon nest site should be regulated as the full extent of the ledge on a building, bridge or any other human-created structure on which the nest scrape or nesting box is located.