

Peregrine sample surveys 1960s

Title

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Description and Summary of Results

The 1961-1962 survey of the Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* found that numbers were much lower than the previously fairly stable population which had been the case for many years. So it was agreed that a sample of sites would be investigated each year to maintain surveillance of what was happening. The samples were somewhat uneven geographically, as they depended on the distribution of dedicated and competent field workers, but the areas with the most consistent annual records were: coasts of Devon and Cornwall, Pembrokeshire coast, Lake District and northern Pennines, Southern Uplands, the Trossachs-Loch Lomond area, Speyside-Deeside area of the central Highlands, Orkney and Shetland.

The 137 territories visited in each of 1962-1964 showed that the decline of the breeding population continued from 1962 to 1963 – number of occupied territories in the sample 83 to 62, and successful pairs from 35 to 27 – but from 1963 and 1964 there was a slight improvement – occupied territories to 66, and successful pairs to 35. In 1965 and 1966 there was no significant change in proportion of occupied territories or breeding success of remaining birds – observations on 220 territories in 1965 and 213 territories in 1966. Both territory occupation and breeding success in the east and central Scottish Highlands, N England and Northern Ireland, showed a slight recovery but in the southwest Highlands and S Scotland, breeding success was lower in 1966, although without a decrease in occupied territories. By 1967-1968, recovery was clearly happening in certain northern inland districts, but there was little evidence of improvement in any coastal district. And this recovery continued slowly in 1969 and 1970.

In the areas with some recovery the reoccupying Peregrines usually took over the deserted traditional nesting cliffs, and no completely new breeding places became known. In many territories, the same selection of eyrie ledges favoured before desertion were used by the new birds. There was thus no tendency for numbers to rise above the 'ceiling' previously established in any area, and in particular, the slightly affected population of the central and eastern Highlands continued to show the stability which once characterised Peregrine numbers in most parts of Britain.

Methods of Data Capture

Known Peregrine enthusiasts were contacted and asked to survey territories which had traditionally been occupied in the past and which had usually been visited during the complete survey of 1961-1962. Field methods were the same with observers asked to record the presence or absence of birds and whether or not they were successful in their breeding attempts. As for the complete survey multiple visits through April to June were encouraged to try to determine the status of each territory as accurately as possible. In

practice about a quarter to a third of territories were visited in at least one of the years through the 1960s.

Purpose of Data Capture

To keep track of numbers and distribution of the Peregrine through a period which was thought to be going to be critical following drastic declines.

Geographic Coverage

All of Britain within the range of the Peregrine.

Temporal Coverage

The breeding seasons of 1963 to 1970, although only those of 1963-1966 were formally written up as two separate papers. Results from 1967 to 1970 are incorporated into the paper describing the 1971 complete census.

Other Interested parties

The BTO supported this continuing monitoring in principle and with publicity but did not contribute specifically.

Organiser(s)

Derek Ratcliffe.

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

Reports for 1963 to 1966 are in:

Ratcliffe, D.A. 1965. The Peregrine situation in Great Britain 1963-1964. *Bird Study* 12: 66-82; and

Ratcliffe, D.A. 1967. The Peregrine situation in Great Britain 1965-1966. *Bird Study* 14: 238-246.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

BTO Windows network central area but with restricted access.

Computer data -- outline contents

Derek Ratcliffe's spreadsheet contains all his Peregrine information from all surveys and samples.

Computer data -- description of contents

The spreadsheet contains:

County, Grid Reference, Site Name, Nest Site Description (Aspect, Altitude etc), Habitat, Records of Visits (Date, Signs of Activity, Nest Contents, Status Codes, Summary, Notes).

Information held in BTO Archives

Various papers and printouts from the computer files are held by BTO Scotland and in the archives in Thetford.

Notes on Access and Use

The Peregrine is a sensitive species for several reasons and access to the data is therefore strictly limited and by special permission only.

Other information

Notes on Survey Design

Specific Issues for Analysis