



Distribution and number of the Peregrine in Ukraine

Vitalij V. Vetrov¹, Sergei P. Prokopenko¹ and Yuriy V. Milobog²

¹ Ukrainian Birds of Prey Research Centre
vv@raptors.org.ua

² Department of Zoology, Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University,
Prospekt Gagarina 54, Kryvyi Rih, 50086, Ukraine
milobog@foxtrot.dp.ua

Abstract

Two subspecies of the Peregrine breed in Ukraine. They are the nominative *F. p. peregrinus* (Tunstall, 1771) subspecies, distributed throughout the Carpathian Mountains, and the Caucasian subspecies *F. p. brookei* (Sharpe, 1873), occupying the Crimea. In winter, in addition to the above-mentioned subspecies, the tundra Peregrine *F. p. calidus* (Latham, 1790) has been also found.

Key words: Ukraine, Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus peregrinus*, *Falco p. brookei*, *Falco p. calidus*, Carpathian Mountains, Crimea

Nominative subspecies

Recently, up until the middle of the 20th century the range of the nominative subspecies in Ukraine was not restricted to just within the Carpathian region. The bird was found on trees in disused nests of other birds of prey or those of the Raven *Corvus corax* in the northern part of Ukraine (Zubarovsky 1977). Some pairs probably nested there until the 1970's (Prokopenko 1994) or even till the 1980's (Zhezherin 1988). In 2008 the subspecies still breeds only in the Carpathian Mountains, namely in Ivano-Frankivsk and Zakarpatska Oblasts, and its numbers are low, supposedly not more than 10-20 pairs. It should be noted that the data on the present distribution and numbers of this species in the Carpathians is scarce. It is only known that this population is showing no signs of increase and the breeding of the birds is very limited because of the deficit of areas available for breeding (cliffs).

Figure 1. Area of *Falco peregrinus brookei* in Ukraine

Crimean population of *F. p. brookei*

Distribution, numbers and trends of the Crimean population of the Peregrine are known well enough. Until the 1970's-1980's, numbers of Peregrines in the Crimea were gradually declining. Zubarovsky (1977) considered that only several pairs bred in that period in the area. Even an assumption of its complete disappearance existed (Kostin 1983). According to our data, in the 1980's both the Crimean and the Carpathian populations did not exceed 15-20 pairs in total (Prokopenko 1994). Since the 1970's-1980's numbers of breeding birds in the Crimea evidently began growing slowly. In the 1990's new pairs were found, and a marked trend of increasing numbers recorded. The Peregrine appeared in new sites, and certain packing of the range started in breeding areas. In the 2000's the Peregrine numbers began to increase again. Kucherenko and Kostin (2003) summarized data of recent publications including inquiry data and estimated the Crimean population of the Peregrine to be 50-55 pairs. We counted at least 96 territorial pairs in 2006 (Milobog et al. 2008). Taking into account the latest finds and a part of our unpublished data we estimate the number of the Peregrine *Falco peregrinus brookei* presently breeding in the Crimea as at least 100-110 pairs. It should be noted that in the Crimea the Peregrine breeds almost exclusively in the Crimean Mountains (including foothills). It makes nests on cliffs and coastal precipices. The breeding of some pairs is known on tall buildings and TV towers of Yalta and Simferopol. Apart from this, single pairs (not more than 5) periodically breed on coastal precipices in a steppe part of the Crimea (Kerch Peninsula and Tarkhankut Peninsula). There are unchecked data on breeding of birds of unknown subspecies on a TV tower of Kherson (southern Ukraine), and also in some sites of central and northern Ukraine.



Figure 2. Five years old female of *F.p.brookei* in Crimea

Wintering

The tundra Peregrines *F. p. calidus* come for the winter mainly to the Crimea Peninsula. The young birds arrive first – first the males and then the females. Young birds usually arrive between the 14th and 20th of September. The older birds arrive a month later – between the 15th and 20th October. They hunt in agricultural areas and roost overnight in forests or stay in cities using high buildings and constructions. Many birds stay in pairs during wintering. The total number of wintering tundra Peregrines can be estimated to be 100-150 birds. In spring the older birds migrate away first – usually between the 15th and 20th of March. The young birds fly away a month later, usually between the 15th and 20th of April. In the area also the nominative subspecies *F. p. peregrinus* is observed during winter.

Summary

Thus, nowadays at least 120-130 pairs of the Peregrine breed in Ukraine, of them no less than 80% are in the Crimea. A major part of the Crimean population of the species at present inhabits mountains of the southern part of the Crimean Peninsula and is characterized by a stable trend of increasing numbers. A small number of pairs of *Falco peregrinus peregrinus* (about 10-15)

still probably remain in the Carpathians, though the numbers of Peregrines in that area are very restricted because of a general deficit of available breeding sites (cliffs). In addition, reliable information about the Peregrine in the Carpathians is almost absent, and it makes difficult to estimate its numbers and distribution in this part of the country. The latest data on breeding of 5 pairs in this region we received between 1988 and 1995. As for the rest area of Ukraine the Peregrine possibly breeds on TV towers in some cities of southern Ukraine and maybe also in other regions but this assumption still must be proved.



Figure 3. Wintering areas of *Falco peregrinus calidus* and *F.p. peregrinus* in Ukraine

References

- Kostin Y.V. 1983. Ptitsy Kryma.
- Kutserenko V.N., Kostin S.Y. 2003. Sovremennoe sostoyanie krymskoy populatsii sapsana *Falco peregrinus* Tunstall, 1771. Uchenye zapiski Tavricheskovo Natsionalno Universiteta im. V. I. Vernadskovo. Seria Biologia, t. 16, 55, 2: 115-118.
- Prokopenko S.P. 1994. Sokel-sapsan. In: Chervonaya Kniga Ukrainy. Ukrainskaya encyklopedia.
- Prokopenko S.P., Grishchenko A.B. 1996. Zimovki sapsana. Materialy konf. 7-8 kvietia, pp. 296-297. Kiev
- Milobog Y.V., Prokopenko S.P., Vetrov V.V. 2008. Poshirennaya sapsana, *Falco peregrinus* Tunstall, v Ukrainie. In: Znakhedki tvarii Chervono Knigi Ukrainy, pp. 208-211.
- Zubarovskiy V.M. 1977. Fauna Ukrainy, vol. 5. Second edition. Khizhe ptakhi. Naukova Dumka, Kiev. In Ukrainian.
- Zhezherin V.L. 1988. Sapsan. Redkie i ischezayushie rastenya i zivotniye Ukrainy, p. 188-189. Naukova Dumka, Kiev. In Ukrainian.