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BOOK REVIEW

The Peregrine Falcon. Derek Ratcliffe. 1980. Buteo Books, Vermillion, South Dakota (\$42.50) and T. & A.D. Poyser (£12) 416 pages, 4 color plates 32 bl. and white plates.

Few books have been more eagerly awaited than Derek Ratcliffe's major opus on the Peregrine. It has been well worth waiting for; it is a superb book, by far the best monograph on a bird of prey yet published.

As might be expected Ratcliffe has handled the difficult task with great skill, concentrating almost entirely on the North American/European races: *F. p. pealei*, *anatum*, *tundrius* and *peregrinus*. The remaining races are all briefly described in Chapter 15 at the rear of the book. This means that the text is allowed to flow freely, unhampered by continual reference to the behaviour of other races.

The book opens with a realistic account of man's relationship with the Peregrine, be he egg collector, falconer, pigeon fancier or ornithologist, followed by a discussion on population trends and a detailed summary of the distribution in the British Isles. This is so detailed that one is tempted to try to recognize individual eyries. Information has been gleaned from a wide variety of sources and the author gives generous tribute to all those who made a contribution.

For me the book gained momentum from Page 126 onwards when the subject switches to feeding habits, nesting habitat and the breeding cycle. The spectrum broadens and comparisons are made between the behaviour of *peregrinus* and *pealei*, much of the lat-

ter information coming from Wayne Nelson's thesis on the Lanagra peregrines.

On Page 170 Joe Hickey's system of grading cliffs in suitability for nesting is quoted. But is this system now valid? Dwindling populations may tend to survive longer on high cliffs remote from constant human presence. However, in parts of Great Britain where recolonisation is taking place, recolonising pairs often show a strong tendency to pick contiguous territories to a successful breeding pair despite the paucity of the cliff. Furthermore it has been suggested that these birds may be related to the dominant pair and this could be a factor for reducing aggression between them. However, why some first class cliffs remain vacant and some third class ones are tenanted year after year must remain a subject for speculation.

The pair bond in winter is a fascinating subject on which more light needs to be shed. Are certain Peregrines more faithful to their favourite cliff than their mates? My own experience suggests that perhaps they are. One tiercel that I know well has been present both winter and summer on the same stretch of cliff for over 6 years and has had at least 2 different mates if not 3. But the behaviour of individual pairs is so variable no hard and fast rule can be made.

The most compulsive reading in the book is the chapter entitled "The Pesticide Story." Here the author's sense of personal involvement shines through the text. He is the master detective telling his own story.

The photographs are, without exception, new to me and all of a very high order. Donald Watson provides many sketches which are a delight to the eye—full of atmosphere. The presentation is excellent and well up to the standard we have come to expect from these publishers. This reviewer has no hesitation in saying that if you are a raptor enthusiast then you must have the book. I shall not be lending my copy to anyone.

R. B. Treleven

RRF Annual Meeting

The 1981 meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation will be held Friday, October 30 through Monday, November 2, 1981, in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. All sessions and workshops will be held in the Sheraton Mt.-Royal Hotel. The tentative schedule includes workshop sessions on Friday, paper sessions from Saturday through Monday (if necessary) and tours of the Macdonald Raptor Research facilities. Evening films and an art exhibit featuring Canadian artists will also highlight the event.

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