
First Gyrfalcon banded in New Jersey

Leonard J. Soucy, Jr.

On 8 November 1982, at 1218 hours, a Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) was captured and banded at the Kittatinny Mountains Raptor Banding Station, in Sussex County, New Jersey. The bird was an immature female, wing chord 392 mm, tail chord 220 mm, and was grayish-brown in color. This was the first Gyrfalcon banded in New Jersey.

Although the Gyrfalcon has a circumpolar distribution, it is considered by Brown and Amadon (1968, *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World*, New York, McGraw-Hill: 844) to be a single species with much individual variation in color. Gyrfalcons vary from nearly pure white to a uniform dark gray. These "color phases" are believed to be loosely associated with geographic distribution. Cade (1982, *The Falcons of the World*, New York, Comstock/Cornell University Press: 76) states that "the different plumage types grade into one another, with every kind of intermediate condition represented in different individuals."

The underparts of this bird were cream colored with heavy, broad, brown streaking. The upperparts were dark grayish-brown, and each individual feather was edged with buff, giving a definite scaled appearance. The tail was dark grayish-brown with symmetrical buff spots, and had a barred appearance; the 2 central

feathers were darker and less spotted than the rest of the tail. The beak, cere, eyelids, and feet were light blue.

Prior to this banding, a total of 180 Gyrfalcons had been banded in the United States. Because of the species' extreme northern range, only 15 of these were in the contiguous states; the other 165 were in Alaska. There have been 6 banded in Washington, 2 each in Montana and Michigan, and 1 each in Colorado, Wyoming, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. The only other banding in the eastern United States, the Pennsylvania bird, also was captured in the Kittatinny Mountains, near Kempton, in 1973.

The Kittatinny Mountains Raptor Banding Station has operated each fall for the past 13 years. In more than 10,000 hours of observation at this location, this was the first Gyrfalcon ever recorded.

I wish to thank K. Klimkiewicz of the Bird Banding Laboratory for supplying the data on all U.S. Gyrfalcon bandings, and a special thank you to Giselle Chazotte for her help at the banding station on that memorable day.

1390 White Bridge Road, Millington, NJ 07946

Portions of this article were reprinted with permission from *Records of New Jersey Birds* 9:1, 1983.

