

Idaho Peregrine Falcon Survey and Nest Monitoring

2004 Annual Report



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ABSTRACT

Idaho currently has 33 known (either active or historical) peregrine falcon territories; 4 eyries have not been known to be occupied in at least the last 4 years and could be considered historical sites. Nevertheless, all 33 known territories were monitored in 2004 and 26 (79%) were found to be occupied. Eighteen pairs (69%) successfully produced 42 young (highest on record in any single year) for an average of 1.6 fledged young per pair and 2.3 fledged young per successful pair. The 26 occupied territories represent a 2-pair increase over those in 2003 (24). Potential new territories were discovered at several locations during anecdotal surveys in 2004, including 1 on Mount Borah and 1 near Grace in southeast Idaho; these areas, along with other likely breeding sites, will be monitored more closely in 2005. Four nestling peregrines (2♀, 2♂) were banded in 2004 and 1 mortality was reported.

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INTRODUCTION

The American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) was listed as endangered in 1970 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1984). Western populations were severely depressed after steady declines since the 1950's. Peregrine falcons were essentially extirpated from Idaho by 1974 (Bechard et al. 1987). In 1982, peregrine population restoration was initiated through the release of captive-produced young using a process referred to as "hacking" (Heinrich 1987). This effort was an extension of an existing national program begun in 1970 by The Peregrine Fund, Inc., in cooperation with state and federal agencies (Cade 1985).

Surveys for re-establishing pairs of breeding peregrines began in Idaho in 1988. These initial surveys were conducted as part of a tri-state cooperative project within that portion of the state referred to as the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) (Levine 1988). In 1990, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) expanded surveys to other regions of the state.

On 25 August 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) officially delisted the peregrine falcon, removing it from the list of Endangered Species (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999). In doing so, the USFWS has recommended population monitoring continue as stipulated under the de-listing process. A *draft* Monitoring Plan was completed in 2001 accompanied by public comment periods in July 2001 and September 2001. Additional reviews by states (including IDFG) and cooperators occurred in December 2002 and January 2003. The *final* Monitoring Plan was released on 3 December 2003 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2003).

The cooperative post-delisting Monitoring Plan is primarily designed to detect declines in territory occupancy, nest success, and productivity in 6 regions across the U.S. Under the plan, data will be collected from a randomly-selected subset of Peregrine territories for 5 sampling periods, at 3-year intervals, with full implementation beginning in 2003 and ending in 2015. In other words, to meet the mandate of the USFWS to monitor peregrines for not less than 5 years after delisting, the plan calls for continued monitoring in 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015.

Of the 96 territories selected at random for monitoring in 2003 in USFWS Region 1 (CA, ID, NV, OR, WA), 9 occurred in Idaho: Lucile (13i932012), Lewiston (20i982011), Nampa (08i903011), Alpine (03i896033), Redfish Lake (15i933032), Stanley Lake (16i943041), Challis (21i996111), Tower Rock (24i996141), and Williams Lake (28i006181). Territories monitored after 2003 will either be all of the same randomly-chosen territories, a new randomly-chosen set, or a mixture of the 2. Pending sufficient funding and logistical support, we (IDFG and project partners) have every intent and desire to continue monitoring *all* known peregrine territories across the state *on an annual basis*. At an absolute minimum, however, to meet the needs of the post-delisting Monitoring Plan we should monitor the randomly-chosen territories as determined by the USFWS.

METHODS

Pair Monitoring.--Attempts are made to monitor nesting activities of all known pairs of peregrine falcons in Idaho. All known territories, both current and historical, were therefore surveyed for nesting pairs in 2004. Monitoring of peregrine pairs began in March. Observations were made by IDFG biologists with assistance from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and numerous volunteers (especially in the Upper Snake region). Equipment used included binoculars and high powered spotting scopes. Observations were made from locations offering unobstructed views in proximity to nest sites. Efforts were made to avoid disturbance to nesting pairs.

Occupied territories were monitored during the breeding season from courtship initiation through post-fledging. Periodic visits were made to determine nesting success, productivity, and nesting phenology. Attempts were made to count young at successful sites when estimated to be 80% or greater of fledging age (Steenhof 1987). Young (nestlings) were banded at 1 urban territory. Prey remains, eggshell fragments, and unhatched eggs were collected where feasible for later analysis. All other evidence is collected that may be pertinent to documenting results.

Surveys.--Surveys for new peregrine territories have been made in the past depending on staff availability. Typically, these surveys have been restricted to areas of recent nesting activity, recently reported peregrine sightings, and/or suitable potential nesting habitat determined to be worth the survey effort. Unfortunately, due to a lack of time and personnel, no formal surveys for new eyries were able to be conducted in 2004.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Pair Monitoring.--In 2004, 26 pairs of peregrines produced 42 young at 18 successful nest sites for an average of 1.6 young per occupied territory and 2.3 young per successful pair (Tables 1 and 2). No new territories were positively identified although several “promising” leads for follow-up in 2005 were noted.

Statewide pair distribution was as follows: 3 pairs were monitored in northern Idaho; 3 pairs in western Idaho; 11 pairs in central Idaho; and 16 pairs in eastern Idaho (primarily within the GYA). Territories also are summarized by IDFG region (Table 2). The new territory along the Snake River (Conant Valley; 35i036141) that was discovered in 2003 replaced the Pine Creek territory (27i006171) in this year’s report. The Pine Creek birds were observed only on 1 occasion in 2001 and are now believed to have been the Conant Valley pair all along (E. Levine and L. Hanauska-Brown, personal communications).

Three (11%) pairs of peregrines occupied release towers, all of which were successful (fledging 9 young total). The fourth territory at a release tower in Idaho was unoccupied in 2004, as it has been since 1998 when it failed to produce young. Efforts to establish breeding peregrines in IDFG’s Magic Valley region have involved the hacking of captive-raised birds from a fifth release tower at Centennial Marsh in 2003 and 2004.

Table 1. Peregrine falcon productivity in Idaho, 1988–2004.

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Occupied Territories	2	3	9	9	10	14	13	13	17	15	17	21	23	19	22
New Territories	2	1	6	1	1	4	1	1	2	0	1	6	2	0	1
Successful Territories	0	1	6	7	8	11	9	6	6	10	10	10	15	14	11
% Successful	0	0.33	0.67	0.78	0.80	0.79	0.69	0.46	0.35	0.67	0.59	0.48	0.65	0.73	0.50
# Yng. Fledged	0	3	16	18	25	30	20	16	19	21	30	22	36	32	23
# Yng. Fledged/Occupied Territory	0	1	1.8	2.0	2.5	2.1	1.5	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.8	1.0	1.6	1.7	1.0
# Yng. Fledged/Successful Territory	0	3	2.7	2.6	3.1	2.7	2.2	2.7	3.2	2.1	3.0	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.1

Table 1. Continued.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Occupied Territories	24	26													
New Territories	6	0													
Successful Territories	17	18													
% Successful	0.71	0.69													
# Yng. Fledged	38	42													
# Yng. Fledged/Occupied Territory	1.6	1.6													
# Yng. Fledged/Successful Territory	2.2	2.3													

Table 2. Occupancy and fledgling production of peregrine falcon nesting territories monitored in Idaho, 1988–2004.

Peregrine Territories	Type	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
<u>IDFG R1 (Panhandle)</u>																							
17i951012 Clark Fork	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	0	0	1	0	0	2	4	0	-	-					7
<u>IDFG R2 (Clearwater)</u>																							
13i932012 Lucile ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	1	0	-	-	0	3	0	3	0	0	3	2					12
20i982011 Lewiston ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	3	3	0	0	-	-	1					7
<u>IDFG R3 (Southwest)</u>																							
08i903011 Nampa ^a	Silo	-	-	2	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	2	1	4	3					48
09i903021 Shingle Creek	Cliff	u	u	3	2	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	0					12
18i963041 Boise	Bldg	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	4	3					10
<u>IDFG R4 (Magic Valley)</u>																							
<u>IDFG R5 (Southeast)</u>																							
07i905011 Gray's Lake	Tower	-	-	0	2	2	2	2	3	0	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-					12
19i965021 Gray's Ridge	Cliff	-	-	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	2	-	0	1	1	2	-	0					7
26i996161 Soda Springs	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	3	0	4	-	-					8
<u>IDFG R6 (Upper Snake)</u>																							
01i856011 Camas ^b	Tower	0	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	3	2	2	3	2	0	3					41
02i886021 Sawtell	Cliff	0	0	0	-	-	-	u	u	-	u	u	0	0	u	u	u	u					0
03i896033 Alpine ^a	Cliff	u	0	3	2	4	2	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	1	0	0	0					34
04i906043 Henry's Fork	Cliff	-	-	3	0	2	4	?	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	0					15
05i906043 Henry's Lake	Tower	-	-	2	3	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	2	3					24
06i906063 South Fork	Cliff	-	-	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	?	0	0	0	2	0	?	1					7
10i916072 Sheep Creek	Cliff	-	-	-	0	4	4	4	0	0	-	0	0	2	1	1	2	2					20

Table 2. Continued

Peregrine Territories	Type	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
12i936091 Mud Lake	Tower	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	3	3	4	-	-	u	1	2	3					17
14i936103 Swan Valley	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	4	?	0	0	3	4	0	4	3	3	1	0					22
25i996151 Palisades	Cliff	u	-	u	-	-	u	u	u	u	u	-	0	0	u	u	-	-					0
33i036121 Upper Mesa Falls	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	4	3					7
34i036131 Split Creek	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	2	2					4
35i036141 Conant Valley ^c	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	0	u					0
<u>IDFG R7 (Salmon)</u>																							
15i933032 Redfish Lake ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	1	2	3	4	1	1	1	2	u	0	2	0					17
16i943041 Stanley Lake ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	0	0	-	-	-	2	u	u	u	-					3
21i996111 Challis ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	3	3	2	0	2					11
22i996121 Ranch Rock	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	2	1	0	0	3	3					9
23i996131 Red Rock	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	2	0	3	2	2	2					11
24i996141 Tower Rock ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	-	u	u	u	u	-	u	u	0	0	2	2	2	2					8
29i027011 Greenfire	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	0	2	0					2
28i006181 Williams Lake ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	3	4	0	1	2					10
30i037091 Hughes Creek	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	3					4
31i037101 South Cliffs	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	0					1
32i037111 Germer	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	?	2					2
Total		0	3	16	18	25	30	20	16	19	21	30	22	36	32	23	38	42					392

^a Randomly-selected by USFWS as part of 5-year post-delisting Monitoring Plan.

^b Only known occupied territory prior to 1988. Productivity as follows: 1985 (Y/2); 1986 (Y/0); and 1987 (Y/0).

^c Conant Valley territory (35i036141) replaced the Pine Creek territory (27i006171) in 2004 annual report (see 2003 report for more details).

u = unknown occupancy; - = unoccupied territory; ? = unknown productivity. Underlined territory names indicate new territories (none in 2004).

Twenty-one (81%) pairs occupied cliff sites, 13 (62%) of which were successful. Two (8%) pairs occupied nest boxes in urban settings, both of which were successful producing 3 fledglings each. One female fledgling from the Nampa territory (08i903011) was recovered twice from the ground at the nest site, but immediately released. Several months later she was recovered again, this time trapped between two buildings at a local shopping mall. Unfortunately, on this occasion, she had suffered sufficient injuries to require rehabilitation for 2 months before being released again on December 22, 2004.

Statewide, the known number of peregrine falcon occupied territories increased by 2 (10%) from 24 pairs in 2003 to 26 pairs in 2004 (Fig. 1). Correspondingly, the number of successful territories increased from 17 in 2003 to 18 in 2004 (6% increase; Fig. 1); this constituted a 69% nest success rate (Table 1). Overall fledging success increased from 38 to 42 individuals (11% increase; Fig. 1) – this was the highest number of young produced in a single year since record keeping began in 1985. Additional details on territories monitored in 2004 are summarized in Appendix A. In summary, peregrine numbers remained stable-to-increasing in 2004; success rates remained similar to the previous year with annual production reaching an all-time high.

Surveys.--Formal surveys for previously undiscovered peregrine territories were not conducted in 2004. Three possible new territories were discovered during anecdotal observations, however, and will be investigated more thoroughly in 2005. All 3 were in the eastern part of the state. Two birds were seen by a climber on the east face of Mount Borah about 1,000 ft below the summit. Two additional territories were potentially discovered in the Southeast Region, including 1 near Grace, Idaho.

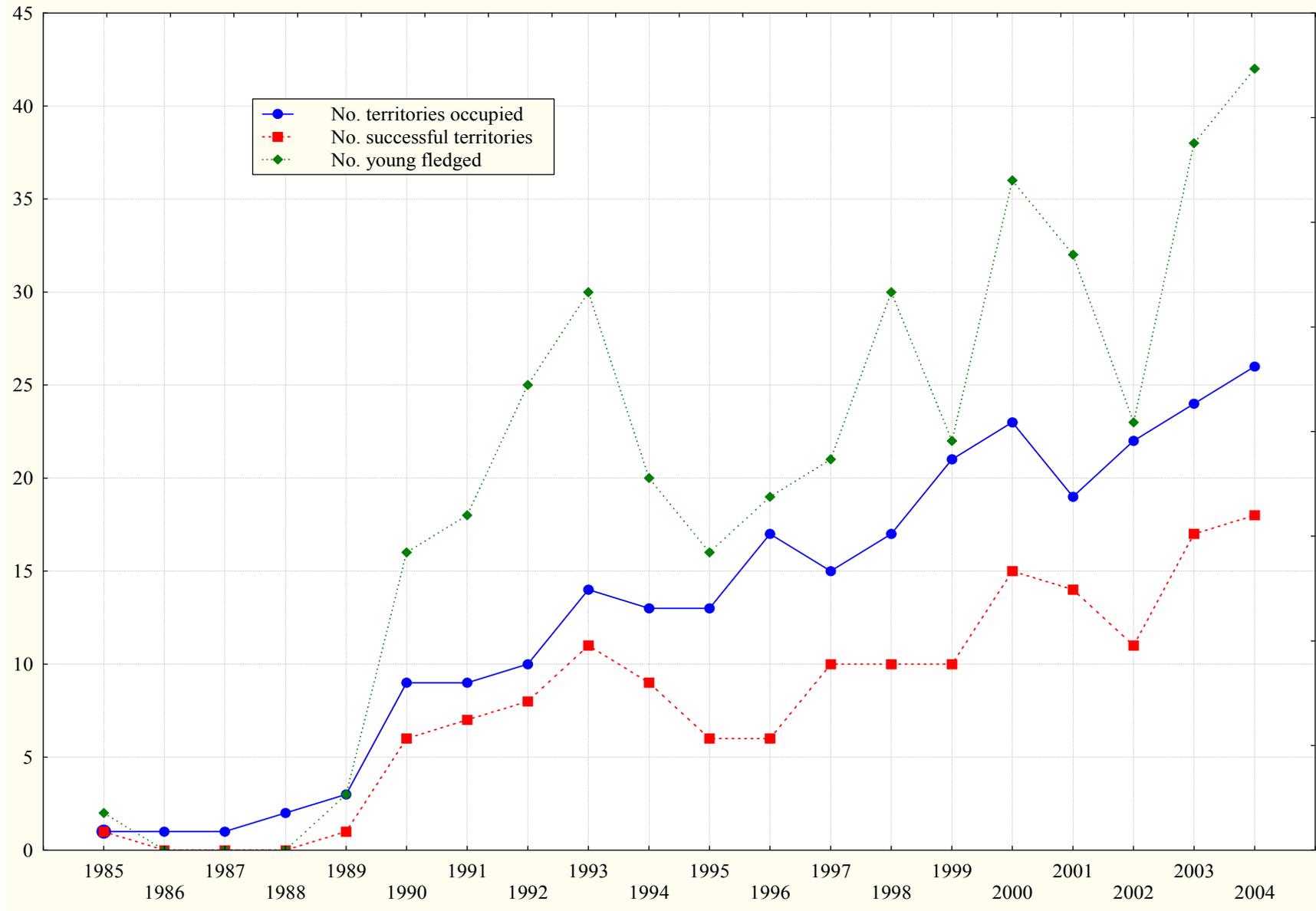
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2005

The status of the peregrine falcon in Idaho is, and will continue to be, a dynamic process, particularly as the population hopefully increases. Because of this, we encourage continued coordinated support for statewide survey and monitoring efforts by nongame IDFG biologists, the BLM, and USFS. In particular, we encourage a continued role in monitoring of known territories by regional IDFG nongame biologists. Table 2 summarizes territories by IDFG region to facilitate this. Regional staff should continue to familiarize themselves with territories and monitoring protocols in their respective regions as they did in 2004.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the USFWS has entered a post-delisting period for monitoring of peregrines. The 9 territories selected at random by the USFWS (see Table 2) should continue to be given priority (unless we hear otherwise). However, as in previous years, we fully encourage the thorough monitoring of *all* known peregrine territories statewide *on an annual basis*.

Finally, new surveys for previously undiscovered eyries also should be conducted as time, funding, and weather permit. No new territories were confirmed in 2004, primarily due to a lack of time and personnel to conduct what are very time-consuming surveys; where possible, and only when monitoring priorities for known territories have been met, we therefore encourage the continued surveillance for additional eyrie locations.

Figure 1. Peregrine falcon territory occupancy, success, and productivity in Idaho, 1985–2004.



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Appendix A. Peregrine falcon nest-site monitoring in Idaho, 2004.

Nest sites in Idaho were monitored by the following individuals: Dick Barker, Jan Barker, Orma Barker, Larry Barnes, Joanne Bonn, Julie Burgess, Mark Delwiche, Diane Evans Mack, Robin Garwood, Vince Guyer, Bruce Haak, Lauri Hanauska-Brown, Jane Hawks, Jim Juza, Ed Levine, Julie Mao, Dale Miller, Julie Mulholland, Troy Parkin, Rhonda Reynolds, Dave Roberts, Joel Sauder, Charlotte Scofield, Audra Serrian, Jennifer Soules, Dave Spicer, Sandy Strong, Dick Struthers, Kit Struthers, David Suhre, Marie Suhre, Rob Thornberry, Martha Wackenhut, and Beth Waterbury.

Statewide:

Number of sites occupied by pairs	=	26
Number of pairs monitored	=	33
Number of successful pairs	=	18
Number of young produced	=	42
Average number of young per pair	=	1.6
Average number of young per successful pair	=	2.3

Alpine (03i8960330): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 0

Land ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Boise (18i963042): Building (box at Capital One)

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: June 24

Land Ownership: Private

Note: Banded 1 female nestling on June 6. Also, 1 bird in this clutch was killed at fledging.

Camas NWR (01i85011): Tower site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 10

Land Ownership: USFWS

Challis (21i996111): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 2

Estimated fledging date: June 20

Land Ownership: BLM

Note: New eyrie location ~400 m north of 2003 eyrie

Clark Fork (17i951012): Cliff site

Occupied: No

Land Ownership: Panhandle National Forest/Private

Conant Valley (35i036141): Cliff site

Occupied: Unknown

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: Private

Note: This territory replaced the Pine Creek territory (27i006171) in this year's report; the same birds are believed to use both the "Conant Valley" and "Pine Creek" eyries as alternate sites.

Germer (32i037111): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 2

Estimated fledging date: July 15

Land Ownership: BLM

Gray's Ridge (07i905021): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Greenfire (29i027011): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: BLM/Private (cliff located adjacent to ownership boundary)

Henry's Fork (04i906043): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Henry's Lake (05i906062): Tower site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 12

Land Ownership: BLM

Hughes Creek (30i037091): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 15

Land Ownership: Salmon-Challis National Forest

Lewiston (20i982011): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 1

Estimated fledging date: June 30

Land Ownership: BLM

Lucile (13i932012): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 2

Estimated fledging date: July 7

Land Ownership: Nez Perce National Forest

Mud Lake (12i936091): Tower site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 6

Land Ownership: State of Idaho

Nampa Sugar (08i903011): Sugar Silo (nest box)

Occupied: Yes (both adults were unbanded, wild peregrines)

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 15

Land Ownership: Amalgamated Sugar Company

Note: Banded 2 male and 1 female nestling on June 27 at ~24 days old.

Palisades (25i996151): Cliff site

Occupied: No

Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Ranch Rock (22i996121): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 3

Land Ownership: BLM

Red Rock (23i996131): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 2

Estimated fledging date: July 10

Land Ownership: Salmon-Challis National Forest

Redfish Lake (15i933032): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes (2 adults seen on July 4)

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: Sawtooth National Forest

Sheep Creek (10i916081): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 2

Estimated fledging date: July 1

Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Soda Springs (26i996161): Cliff site

Occupied: No

Land Ownership: BLM

South Cliffs (31i037101): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: Salmon-Challis National Forest

Note: South "Cliffs" replaced South "Hills" in this report.

South Fork (06i906063): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 1
Estimated fledging date: July 1
Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Split Creek (34i036131): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 2
Estimated fledging date: July 12
Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Swan Valley (14i936103): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 0
Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Tower Rock (24i996141): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 2
Estimated fledging date: July 10
Land Ownership: BLM

Upper Mesa Falls (33i036121): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 3
Estimated fledging date: July 15
Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Williams Lake (28i006181): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 2
Estimated fledging date: July 15
Land Ownership: BLM

Submitted by: *Rex Sallabanks*

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