

Idaho Peregrine Falcon Survey and Nest Monitoring

2006 Annual Report



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December 2006

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ABSTRACT

Idaho currently has 37 known (either active or historical) peregrine falcon territories; 3 eyries have not been known to be occupied in at least the last 5 years and could be considered historical sites. Two new territories were discovered in 2006, both in eastern Idaho. Of the 37 known territories, 34 were monitored in 2006 and 27 (79%) were found to be occupied. Nineteen pairs (70%) successfully produced 41 young for an average of 1.5 fledged young per occupied territory and 2.2 fledged young per successful pair. The 27 occupied territories represent a 3-pair increase over those in 2005 ($n = 24$). Despite this increase, 2006 demographics represent a decline in productivity relative to 2005, which was an unusually good year for peregrines in Idaho. With the exception of 2005, however, success rates for the peregrine in 2006 were similar to other years since the turn of the century, and this was the third consecutive year with >40 birds being successfully fledged. Urban pairs continued to be successful, producing 5 young (1♀, 4♂), all of which were banded. One mortality was reported.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank the following for their important contributions to this work: Joanne Bonn, Robin Garwood, Mike Green, Jerry Gregson, Ed Levine, Mark Orme, Signe Sather-Blair, and staff at the Amalgamated Sugar Company; and IDFG personnel Bruce Haak, Lauri Hanauska-Brown, Julie Mulholland, Evin O’Neale, Joel Sauder, Martha Wackenhut, Paul Wackenhut, and Beth Waterbury. Monitoring of eyries in 2006 benefited significantly from observations made by the following volunteers: Dick Barker, Jan Barker, Jim Burtlow, Steve Butterfield, Ed Cannady, Bob Carter, Mark Delwiche, Harold Gilpin, Jerry Gregson, Troy Hinck, Jim Juza, Chris Klingler, Eric Leidecker, Matt Proett, Jesse Rawson, Jereme Sommers, Lynn Stone, David Suhre, Marie Suhre, and Jerry Williams. Paul Wik with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife monitored the “Lewiston” territory which was located on the Washington side (in Clarkston) of the Snake River in 2006. We also are grateful to the private landowners who granted permission for us to visit sites located on or through their property (especially at Swan Valley and Ranch Rock territories). Financial support for this work was provided by the Nongame Wildlife Program (IDFG), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, and Bureau of Land Management.

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 1950s. 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 under the post-delisting Monitoring Plan 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). 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 in 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015.

METHODS

Pair Monitoring.--In general, attempts are always made to monitor nesting activities of all known pairs of peregrine falcons in Idaho. In 2006, 34 territories, including historical, currently active, and any newly-discovered, were surveyed for nesting pairs; 3 territories were not monitored due to a lack of time by IDFG personnel, especially for those eyries that have had no peregrine activity for several years. 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 2 urban territories. 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 previously undiscovered territories were focused in eastern Idaho, in IDFG regions 6 and 7 (Upper Snake and Salmon, respectively). Cliffs with the apparent potential to provide suitable nest sites were scanned with binoculars and a spotting scope from late April through early July. Access to cliff sites was primarily gained by hiking steep canyons and trailheads. Observations of all raptors were recorded and peregrine sightings were closely monitored. Maps of survey areas along with detailed field notes are reported in Gregson (2006).

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Pair Monitoring.--In 2006, 27 pairs of peregrines produced 41 young at 19 successful nest sites for an average of 1.5 young per occupied territory and 2.2 young per successful pair (Tables 1 and 2). Two territories are new to this year's report, both in eastern Idaho (Upper Snake region).

Statewide pair distribution was as follows: 2 pairs were monitored in northern Idaho; 2 pairs in western Idaho; 12 pairs in central Idaho; and 18 pairs in eastern Idaho (primarily within the GYA). Territories also are summarized by IDFG region (Table 2).

Three (11%) pairs of peregrines occupied release towers, 2 of which were successful (fledging 5 total young). The fourth territory at a release tower in Idaho (Gray's Lake; 07i905011) was not monitored in 2006. This territory is now considered an historical site because it was last occupied in 1998 (when it failed to produce young). Efforts to

Table 1. Peregrine falcon productivity in Idaho, 1988–2006.

	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	24	27											
New Territories	6	0	2	2											
Successful Territories	17	18	20	19											
% Successful	0.71	0.69	0.83	0.70											
# Yng. Fledged	38	42	49	41											
# Yng. Fledged/Occupied Territory	1.6	1.6	2.0	1.5											
# Yng. Fledged/Successful Territory	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.2											

Table 2. Occupancy and fledgling production of peregrine falcon nesting territories monitored in Idaho, 1988–2006.

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	-	-	u	u			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	2	0			14
20i982011 Lewiston ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	3	3	0	0	-	-	1	2	3			12
<u>IDFG R3 (Southwest)</u>																							
08i903011 Nampa ^a	Silo	-	-	2	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	2	1	4	3	3	2			53
09i903021 Shingle Creek	Cliff	u	u	3	2	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	u			12
18i963042 Boise	Bldg	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	4	3	5	3			18
<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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	u			12
19i965021 Gray's Ridge	Cliff	-	-	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	2	-	0	1	1	2	-	0	-	1			8
26i996161 Soda Springs	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	3	0	4	-	-	-	-			8
36i045031 Last Chance Canal	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	0	0	-			0
<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	0	2			43
02i886021 Sawtell	Cliff	0	0	0	-	-	-	u	u	-	u	u	0	0	u	u	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	2	2			38
04i906043 Henry's Fork	Cliff	-	-	3	0	2	4	?	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	?	1			16
05i906043 Henry's Lake	Tower	-	-	2	3	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	2	3	2	3			29
06i906063 South Fork	Cliff	-	-	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	?	0	0	0	2	0	?	1	2	1			10

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
10i916072 Sheep Creek	Cliff	-	-	-	0	4	4	4	0	0	-	0	0	2	1	1	2	2	2	1			23
12i936091 Mud Lake	Tower	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	3	3	4	-	-	u	1	2	3	0	0			17
14i936103 Swan Valley	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	4	?	0	0	3	4	0	4	3	3	1	0	1	0			23
25i996151 Palisades	Cliff	u	-	u	-	-	u	u	u	u	u	-	0	0	u	u	-	-	u	1			1
33i036121 Upper Mesa Falls	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	4	3	2	-			9
34i036131 Split Creek	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	2	2	3	3			10
35i036141 Conant Valley	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	0	u	u	u			0
<u>38i066151 Middle Canyon</u>	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	?			0
<u>39i066161 Chilly Slough</u>	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	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	2	?			19
16i943041 Stanley Lake ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	0	0	-	-	-	2	u	u	u	-	-	?			3
21i996112 Challis ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	3	3	2	0	2	3	3			17
22i996122 Ranch Rock	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	2	1	0	0	3	3	3	3			15
23i996131 Red Rock	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	2	0	3	2	2	2	2	3			16
24i996141 Tower Rock ^a	Cliff	u	u	u	-	u	u	u	u	-	u	u	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	0			10
29i027012 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	3	2			15
30i037091 Hughes Creek	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	1	3	3	2			9
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	3	3			8
37i057121 Pettit Lake	Cliff	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	2	2			4
Total		0	3	16	18	25	30	20	16	19	21	30	22	36	32	23	38	42	49	41			482

^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).

u = unknown occupancy; - = unoccupied territory; ? = unknown productivity. Underlined territory names indicate new territories for this report.

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 annually since 2003. In mid-June 2006, 3 birds (2♀, 1♂) were placed in the release tower. The hack box was then opened in late June and all 3 birds successfully dispersed from the area.

Twenty-two (82%) pairs occupied cliff sites, 15 (75%) of which were successful. Two (7%) pairs occupied nest boxes in urban settings, both of which were successful. These urban pairs produced a total of 5 young (1♀, 4♂), all of which were banded. The Nampa pair produced 2 young (2♂), but approximately 1 month post-fledging, the carcass of a juvenile peregrine was recovered in the vicinity of the nestbox. Unfortunately, the carcass had no legs and thus no band on the tarsus to allow for positive identification. The female member of the Boise pair was replaced in 2006 by a sub-adult (first-year) bird. Despite being a young female and 6 weeks behind schedule, however, this pair successfully raised 3 young in 2006 (1♀, 2♂).

Statewide, the known number of peregrine falcon occupied territories increased by 3 (12%) from 24 pairs in 2005 to 27 pairs in 2006 (Fig. 1). In contrast, the number of successful territories decreased from 20 in 2005 to 19 in 2006 (5% decrease; Fig. 1). Overall fledging success decreased from a record high of 49 individuals in 2005 to 41 in 2006 (16% decrease; Fig. 1). Additional details on territories monitored in 2006 are summarized in Appendix A. In summary, peregrine numbers remained stable in 2006. Despite a decline in nesting success relative to 2005, which was an unusually good year for peregrines in Idaho, demographic parameters remain similar to or better than previous records.

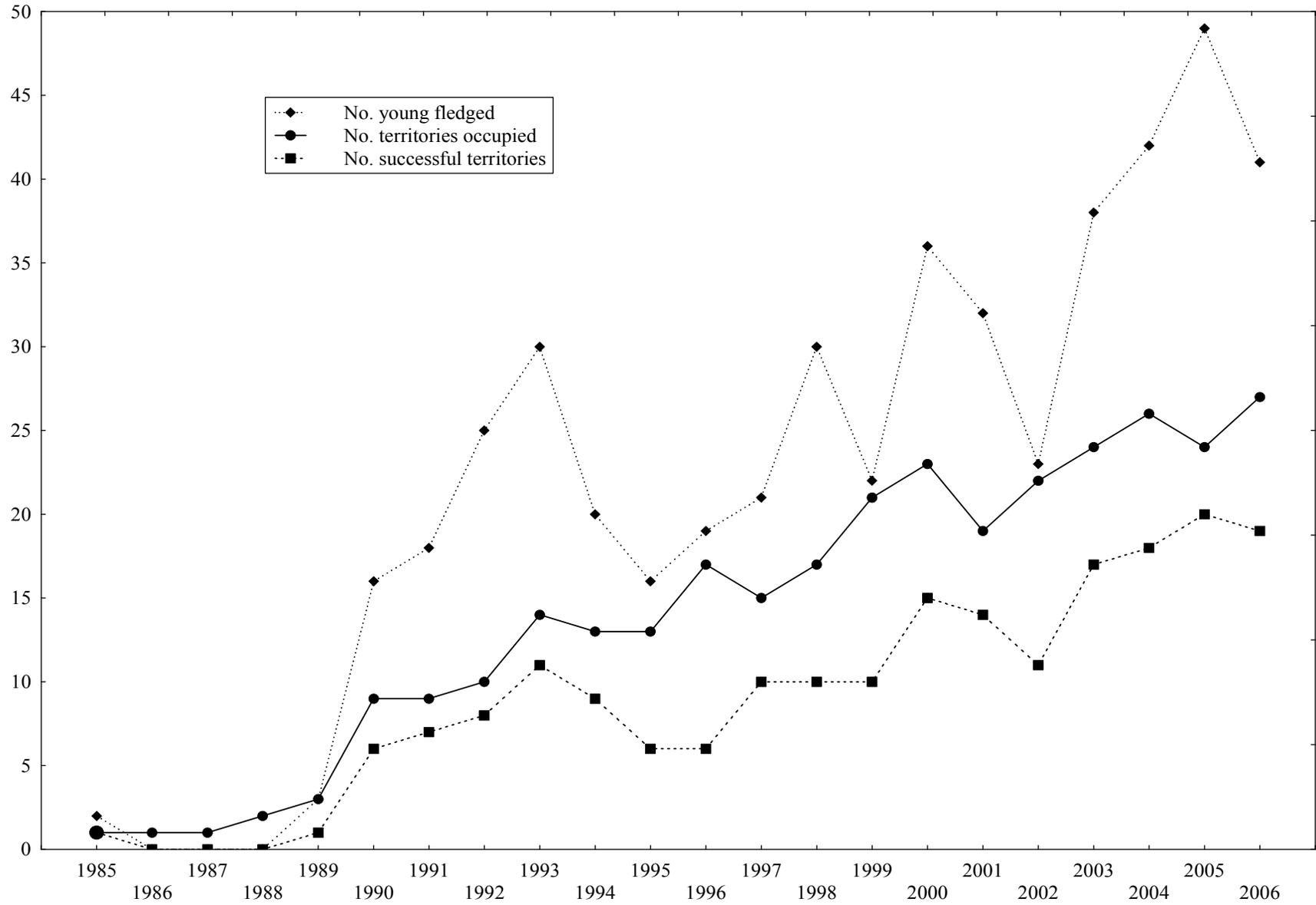
Surveys.--Approximately 85 hours were spent conducting surveys for new territories in 2006 (39 hrs in IDFG region 6; 46 hrs in region 7). These efforts resulted in the discovery of 2 previously undocumented territories, both in the Upper Snake region (Gregson 2006). Both territories were clearly occupied at the beginning of the season and 1 produced a single nestling during late June. Ultimately, however, the success of both nests was questionable due to limited time for revisits, challenging access, and associated difficulties observing the eyries *per se*. Efforts to improve monitoring of these eyries, as well as follow-up on other potential territories discovered during surveys, will occur in 2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2007

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. As mentioned in the Introduction, we are in 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. 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. We recommend that any funding received for peregrine monitoring in 2007 also be used to conduct surveillance for new territories wherever possible.

Figure 1. Peregrine falcon territory occupancy, success, and productivity in Idaho, 1985–2006.



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Appendix A. Peregrine falcon nest-site monitoring in Idaho, 2006.

Nest sites in Idaho were monitored by the following individuals: Dick Barker, Jan Barker, Joanne Bonn, Jim Burtlow, Steve Butterfield, Ed Cannady, Bob Carter, Mark Delwiche, Robin Garwood, Harold Gilpin, Jerry Gregson, Bruce Haak, Troy Hinck, Jim Juza, Chris Klingler, Eric Leidecker, Ed Levine, Julie Mulholland, Evin O'Neale, Matt Proett, Jesse Rawson, Joel Sauder, Jereme Sommers, Lynn Stone, David Suhre, Marie Suhre, Martha Wackenhut, Paul Wackenhut, Beth Waterbury, Paul Wik, and Jerry Williams.

Statewide:

Number of sites occupied by pairs	=	27
Number of pairs monitored	=	34
Number of successful pairs	=	19
Number of young produced	=	41
Average number of young per pair	=	1.5
Average number of young per successful pair	=	2.2

Alpine (03i896033): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 2

Estimated fledging date: July 10

Land ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

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

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 28

Land Ownership: Private

Note: Banded 1 female and 2 male nestlings on July 8 at approximately 21 days old.

Camas NWR (01i85011): Tower site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 2

Estimated fledging date: June 1

Land Ownership: USFWS

Challis (21i996112): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 1

Land Ownership: BLM

Note: New alternate eyrie located ~600 m south of 2005 eyrie (possibly the same eyrie that was used in 2003).

Chilly Slough (39i066161): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: BLM

Note: New territory for 2006.

Clark Fork (17i951012): Cliff site

Occupied: ?

Land Ownership: Panhandle National Forest/Private

Note: No attempt was made to monitor this territory in 2006.

Conant Valley (35i036141): Cliff site

Occupied: ?

Land Ownership: Private

Note: One attempt was made to visit this site on 04/26/06 but no birds were present.

Germer (32i037111): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 22

Land Ownership: BLM

Gray's Ridge (07i905021): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 1

Estimated fledging date: July 10

Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Greenfire (29i027012): Cliff site

Occupied: No

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

Henry's Fork (04i906043): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 1

Estimated fledging date: July 21

Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Henry's Lake (05i906043): Tower site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: July 23

Land Ownership: BLM

Hughes Creek (30i037091): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 2

Estimated fledging date: July 10

Land Ownership: Salmon-Challis National Forest

Last Chance (36i045031): Cliff site

Occupied: No

Land Ownership: BLM

Lewiston (20i982011): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 3

Estimated fledging date: June 19

Land Ownership: BLM

Lucile (13i932012): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: Nez Perce National Forest

Middle Canyon (38i066151): Cliff site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: Salmon-Challis National Forest

Note: New territory for 2006.

Mud Lake (12i936091): Tower site

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 0

Land Ownership: State of Idaho

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

Occupied: Yes

Number of young produced: 2

Estimated fledging date: June 26

Land Ownership: Amalgamated Sugar Company

Note: Banded 2 male nestlings on May 21 at approximately 22 days old. Approximately 1 month post-fledging, the carcass of a juvenile peregrine recovered in the vicinity of the nestbox was believed to be that of 1 of the young fledged from this site.

Palisades (25i996151): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 1
Estimated fledging date: July 20
Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Pettit Lake (37i057121): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 2
Estimated fledging date: July 10
Land Ownership: Sawtooth National Recreation Area

Ranch Rock (22i996122): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 3
Estimated fledging date: June 30
Land Ownership: BLM
Note: New alternate eyrie located ~300 m south on cliff face relative to 2004–2005 eyrie.

Red Rock (23i996131): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 3
Estimated fledging date: August 5
Land Ownership: Salmon-Challis National Forest

Redfish Lake (15i933032): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: ?
Land Ownership: Sawtooth National Forest

Sheep Creek (10i916072): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 1
Estimated fledging date: July 20
Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Shingle Creek (09i903021): Cliff site
Occupied: ?
Land Ownership: Nez Perce National Forest
Note: No attempt was made to monitor this territory in 2006.

Soda Springs (26i996161): Cliff site
Occupied: No
Land Ownership: BLM

South Cliffs (31i037101): Cliff site
Occupied: No
Land Ownership: Salmon-Challis National Forest

South Fork (06i906063): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 1
Estimated fledging date: July 15
Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Split Creek (34i036131): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 3
Estimated fledging date: July 15
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: 0
Land Ownership: BLM

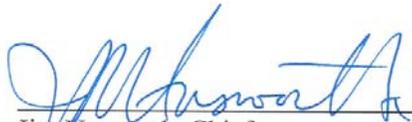
Upper Mesa Falls (33i036121): Cliff site
Occupied: No
Land Ownership: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Williams Lake (28i006181): Cliff site
Occupied: Yes
Number of young produced: 2
Estimated fledging date: July 10
Land Ownership: BLM

Submitted by: Rex Sallabanks

Approved by:

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME



Jim Unsworth, Chief
Bureau of Wildlife



Chuck Harris, Nongame Program Manager
Bureau of Wildlife