Restoration of The Peregrine Falcon in Poland 1990–2016

Janusz Sielicki, Slawomir Sielicki, Falcon Society

The tree-nesting population of the Peregrine Falcon Fa*lco peregrinus peregrinus* formerly inhabited a large part of Central and Eastern Europe. Its range covered northern-eastern Germany, eastern Denmark, Poland, southern Sweden and Finland, the Baltic States, Belarus, northern Ukraine and the lowlands of Russia up to the Ural Mountains. In 1950s Peregrine populations drastically decreased through its whole worldwide range, as a result of environmental contamination (mainly Persistent Organic Pollutants, including DDT). Some populations became extinct, including the whole tree-nesting European population. The last tree nest in Poland was found in 1964.

Falconers started to breed Peregrines and developed methods for intensive breeding and reintroduction, at first in the US, then in Germany and other countries. With the ban on DDT in most countries, the situation of the Peregrine began to improve and populations that survived the crisis began to rebuild.

Reintroduction significantly accelerated the restoration process in many places, some populations were restored from absolute zero. Unfortunately, the tree-nesting population did not begin to regenerate naturally and so the only way to restore it is reintroduction.

The tree-nesting project was successfully conducted in eastern part of Germany. The tree nesting project was started after the German reunification and conducted between the east German protectionist organisation “Arbeitskreis Wanderfalkenschutz (AWS)”, the hunter’s organisation “Landesjagdverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (LJV)” and falconers from German Falconers Orden

(Deutscher Falkenorden – DFO). In Germany there are circa 50 pairs breeding on trees now.

In Poland falconers started their first attempts to breed Peregrines at the end of the 1970s, with the first results in mid 1980s. Reintroductions in Poland started in 1990 and were conducted mainly in forest areas, with some in mountains (Pieniny) and cities (Warszawa, Kraków). The first breeding attempt in Poland was in Warsaw in 1998, with first success in 1999. The population established in cities and south in mountains.

Since 2010 the whole restitution program is being conducted by the Society for Wild Animals Falcon. In 2010–2016 a total of 576 young Peregrines were released in forests. In Poland the first chicks from a nest on tree were ringed in 2012, with 8 known nests on trees in 2016.

Tree-nesting population recovery is based on idea of imprinting on place of birth. That proved to be successful with established and growing population in Germany and seed population in Poland.

Poland is a key country for the success of the tree-nesting Peregrine recovery in Europe. Currently the work on this ecotype is also being conducted in Germany and projects are planned for Lithuania, Belarus and Russia. The necessity to conduct the tree-nesting recovery project was included by IUCN/Birdlife International into the Species fact sheet, the Peregrine on a global level has a Least Concern status, except for the tree-nesting population which requires further active conservation actions.

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