

ADVISORY INFORMATION – PEREGRINE FALCON



Introduction

The peregrine is a powerfully built, neatly compact, medium-sized falcon, and is the fastest bird in the world. They are increasingly found in quarry environments, helping the British population grow to around 1,500 pairs. Watching a peregrine stoop at speeds in excess of 150 miles per hour is breathtaking – one of nature’s great spectacles.

Key Points

- **Quarry staff should be vigilant to illegal killing of peregrines.** Please report any suspicious activity to the RSPB immediately on 01767 680551 or 07803 241452 (this includes dead peregrines or other ‘bait’ birds, probably a pigeon, tied to something to prevent it flying away). If you find one of these baited birds then do not touch it because it will probably be coated with poison.
- Intentional and reckless disturbance of peregrines when they are nesting or when they have dependant young is illegal under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. *Any such offence against peregrines can attract fines of up to £5,000 per offence and/or a custodial sentence of up to 6 months.*
- Quarry operators need to remain alert to the possibility of nesting peregrines in locations where prolonged activity is likely to occur during the breeding season (early February to late July). *Please note that only individuals with an appropriate licence can investigate and assess a peregrine’s nesting status.*
- If nesting occurs in an operational area of the quarry then a peregrine management plan must be written after taking advice from the RSPB.

Ecology

Peregrines are now widespread in the UK, and reach their highest densities in upland areas of Wales, southern Scotland and northwest England. The peregrine feeds primarily on birds, which it catches in flight. Feral pigeons are favourite prey wherever they are freely available. The female lays a clutch of, usually, three eggs in late March in a shallow 'scrape' in soil on a ledge or within a cavity. The nest is usually on a high, sheer cliff face where ground predators have limited access.

In quarries, peregrines will often hold year-round territory on a favoured cliff face, provided they remain undisturbed by human activities. They will be far more likely to breed if a suitable nest site is available. Peregrines show considerable tolerance to human activity, noise, light and vibration, but will **not tolerate human disturbance near the nest or from above**. When a peregrine is flying above you, making a 'kek, kek, kek' call, then retreat immediately as this is a clear indication that you are causing disturbance.

Threats

Although most people simply enjoy the sheer spectacle of birds, sadly others are more criminally minded. In recent years peregrines particularly have been targeted, their nests destroyed and eggs and chicks stolen. **Quarry staff can play an important role** in continuing vigilance to protect against the illegal killing of peregrines.



Managing your site

If nesting occurs in an operational area of the quarry then a peregrine management plan must be written with the advice of the RSPB. This may include details on blasting and vehicle movements to reduce the likelihood of disturbance, e.g. blasting may have to be discontinued at the quarry face where the birds have been observed to perch and nest.

Remember, all wild birds are protected by legislation making it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, its eggs or nests whilst in use or being built.