

POPULATION TRENDS OF THE PEREGRINE FALCON (*FALCO PEREGRINUS*) IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

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INTRODUCTION

In West Germany there are two groups employed in controlling, protecting and guarding Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) eyrie sites. The 'Arbeitsgemeinschaft Wanderfalkenschutz' (AGW) is a working group for the protection of the Peregrine Falcon, which is controlling eyries in Baden-Württemberg, a county in the south-west. The 'Aktion Wanderfalken- und Uhuschutz' (AWU) is a society for the protection of Peregrine Falcons and Eagle Owls (*Bubo bubo*) in all West German areas outside of Baden-Württemberg. Attempts to protect both of these species simultaneously sometimes cause conflicts. The AWU has supported French and Swiss colleagues in guarding their Peregrine eyries near the German border. Recently, however, this support has been reduced to nearly nil because it is no longer needed.

Nearly 80 percent of all Peregrine Falcon eyries are located in Baden-Württemberg. The rest of the population is located in Bavaria and Hessen. It is hoped that in Rhineland-Pfalz the Peregrine will start breeding in 1983. A pair occupied a cliff there this year (1982) but did not start breeding, probably because the female was a yearling. In the AWU-controlled area pairs composed of an adult and a yearling were never successful; however, there have been a few cases of such pairs breeding successfully in Baden-Württemberg.

THE DECLINE OF THE PEREGRINE

The decline of the Peregrine in West Germany from 1950 to 1965 was reported by Mebs (1969). In 1950 there were 350 to 400 tree- and cliff-nesting pairs in West Germany. This number had declined to approximately 50 pairs by 1971. Nest-guarding started in 1966 and is still considered necessary to prevent theft of young falcons and eggs. The figure of 50 pairs remained nearly constant until 1975, when a slight increase took place. The number of pairs and successfully breeding pairs has continued to increase since then. In 1981 there were approximately 65 pairs of Peregrine Falcons in West Germany. Not all of the pairs have bred successfully each year (see *Tables 1* and *2*). All pairs are located south of the river Main. The tree-nesting Peregrine population of West Germany is extinct. From 1971 onwards, the Eagle Owl population in Bavaria increased; later an increase

Table 1: Summary of reproductive success of Peregrine Falcons in West Germany, 1971–81.

Region \ Year	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Baden-Württemberg ¹											
Number of adults	67	73	70	67	76	71	78	87	80	115	130
Number of young fledged	25	19	20	20	24	34	27	47	43	61	85
Other counties of West Germany ²											
Number of pairs	21	20	18	18	16	17	16	17	17	16	16
Number of young fledged	17	14	13	13	12	15	14 + 4*	12 + 3*	15 + 4*	22	21

Notes: * Number of released captive-produced Peregrine Falcons by fostering.

1. Data based on F. Schilling & C. König, and P. Wolf (pers. comm.).

2. Data based on C. v. Eschwege, H. Zahn, P. Wolf (pers. comm.).

Table 2: Histories of some Peregrine Falcon eyries studied by AWU (based on data supplied by C. v. Eschwege, H. Zahn *et al.*, pers. comm.).

Key: P = only pair present, no young fledged; 1, 2, 3 etc = no. of young fledged; + 1, 2, 3 etc = no. of fostered young; ♂, ♀ = only adult ♂ or ♀ present; EO = cliff occupied by Eagle Owl

Year/ location	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
L.S.	2	♀	♀	1	P	P	2	♀	P	♂	♂,EO	♂,EO	EO	EO
He	1	2	3	1	P	2	P	P	P	3 + 1	P	0 + 2	1	P
Ba 1	P	P	P	2	2	1	1	P	P	1 + 3	0 + 3	0 + 2	3*	—
Ba 2	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	0 + 3**	3
Ba 3	P	1	3	♀,EO	♀,EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO
Ba 4	1	4	1	♀,EO	♀,EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO
Ba 5	2	3	2	3	2	P,EO	P,EO	♂,EO	♂,EO	♂,EO	♂,EO	EO	EO	EO
Ba 6	P	P	P	P	P	P	♀,EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO
Ba 7	1	1	P	P	P	♀,EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO	EO

Notes: * Adult ♂ killed by Goshawk.

** Died by starvation.

Table 3: Release of captive-produced Peregrine Falcons in West Germany (based on C. Saar, G. Trommer, W. Bergerhausen).

Year	Number of Falcons	Breeder	Remarks
1977	4	Saar	In Berlin by hacking.
	3	Trommer/Röder	Northern Bavaria by fostering.
	1	Trommer/Röder	Southern Hessen by fostering.
1978	3	Trommer	Northern Bavaria by fostering.
	3	Saar	Berlin by hacking.
	3	Saar/Trommer	Northern Hessen by hacking.
	6	Röder	Southern Hessen by hacking from <i>block</i> .
1979	2	Trommer	Northern Bavaria by fostering (eyrie without young).
	2	Trommer	Southern Hessen by fostering (eyrie without young).
	4	Saar/Trommer	Hessen by hacking (2 killed by Goshawk).
	3	Röder	Lower Saxonia by hacking.
	3	Saar	Northern Bavaria by hacking.
	2	Röder	Southern Hessen by hacking.
	2	Saar	Cologne Cathedral by hacking.
	2	—	Northern Eifel by hacking.
	3	Trommer	Northern Bavaria by fostering, after death of adult ♀, fledged young died by starvation.
	5	Saar	Northern Hessen by hacking (cliff).
1980	3	Saar	Northern Hessen by hacking (building).
	3	Saar	Northern Hessen by hacking (cliff).
	4	Saar	Berlin by hacking.
	2	Trommer	Northern Bavaria by cross-fostering (Goshawk).
	6	Saar (4)	Northern Hessen by hacking (cliff).
		Trommer (2)	
	4	Saar	Northern Hessen by hacking (cliff).
	5	Saar (3)	Northern Hessen by hacking (building).
		Trommer (2)	
	4	Saar	Berlin by hacking from tree-eyrie.
1981	3	Trommer	Northern Bavaria by hacking.
	2	Trommer	Northern Bavaria by cross-fostering (Goshawk), but died of <i>Clostridium perfringens</i> .

occurred in other West German counties as well. In the area controlled by AWU, six Peregrine Falcon cliffs were occupied by Eagle Owls (five in Franconian Jura, one in Lower Saxonia; see Table 2). Eventually the Peregrines disappeared; the same happened at some cliffs in Baden-Württemberg.

In 1980 the AGW published in *Journal für Ornithologie* the fate of broods in Baden-Württemberg during 1966 to 1978:

- 25% were destroyed by martens, eagle owls and ticks.
- 10% were destroyed by weather, struggles with rivals and changing of partners.
- 5% were destroyed by human disturbance, including robbing of nests.
- 15% ended by abandoning the clutch or by incubating for longer than normal (presumably the eggs were added).
- 45% fledged successfully.

On 24 June 1980, I found the pluckings of an adult male Peregrine killed by a Goshawk near the breeding cliff. The female falcon provided the three fledged young with food and reared them to independence. In 1981 and 1982 no pair bred at this cliff.

In 1977 the release of captive-produced Peregrine Falcons in West Germany started. So far 87 falcons have been released (see Table 3); at least two of them

have been killed by Goshawks and the pluckings of the two young fledged falcons have been found. In 1982 a pair of released Peregrines started to breed in the German Democratic Republic, near a release site in Northern Hessen, West Germany.

The Peregrine Falcon population in West Germany seems to be recovering but, to preserve the species in the future, great efforts by all parties interested in birds of prey are necessary.

REFERENCES

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