

the JOURNAL
NORTH AMERICAN FALCONERS ASSOCIATION 2019





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Protecting and Serving
FALCONRY
IN NORTH AMERICA
SINCE 1961

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Greetings Members,

Welcome to 2020! WOW, NAFA has been here protecting your rights as a falconer since 1961! Incredible! I want to thank all those who worked so tirelessly this past year to make being a member of NAFA such a rewarding experience. A huge **thank you** has to go out to our amazing board of volunteers who work unselfishly behind the scenes daily to keep your rights as a falconer intact.

I am proud to say, since taking over as NAFA's Editor, I have produced 1,260 pages of material for all of you to read and view. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the dedicated members who sat down at their computers to create the articles and stories that have filled these hundreds of pages for you to enjoy. For those of you who have yet to contribute, remember all of us have experiences to share, whether they are educational or humorous. We would love to hear from you. Take a moment and shoot me a note with your article and photos, and I'll see what I can do to make you famous! =)

In the meantime, have a safe rest of your season. Remember to be kind, caring, and pursue this noble sport at only the very highest level.

Dan Milner



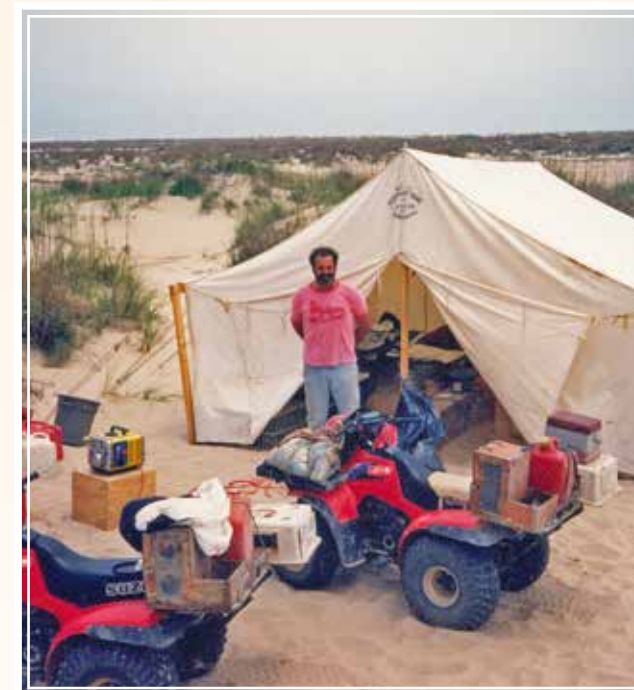
PEREGRINE SURVEYS AT ASSATEAGUE AND PADRE ISLANDS

BY MICHAEL YATES

In the autumn of 1938 Al Nye and Bill Turner discovered a concentration at Assateague Island, Maryland, of a previously-unrecognized race of migratory Arctic nesting peregrines. Al captured the first there in 1939, and Clay White formally described the *Falco peregrinus tundrius* subspecies three decades later. In the interim, tundra peregrines trapped on coastal beaches became the gold standard in development of American longwing falconry as the Eastern anatum peregrine population failed and disappeared.



MIKE WITH AL NYE (1915-1992) ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS FIRST CAPTURE AT ASSATEAGUE



NORTH PADRE CAMP, 1987

At the 1965 Madison conference documenting the peregrine's decline and foreshadowing its protected status, Jim Enderson advocated the collection of coastal migration data as population indices. Falconry take of peregrines was prohibited at Assateague after 1969, and in 1970 Scott Ward and Bob Berry established a standardized survey there that continues uninterrupted to this day. Scott then partnered with Bill Mattox and Bill Burnham to launch the Greenland Peregrine Falcon Survey (1972-1998), and in 1977 established with Ken Riddle the Padre Island Peregrine Falcon Survey. Spring surveys began at Padre in 1979 with the discovery of large concentrations staging during northward migration, and the Padre surveys have continued to the present. Earthspan was formed by survey principals as a not-for-profit to conduct research that included these migration studies.

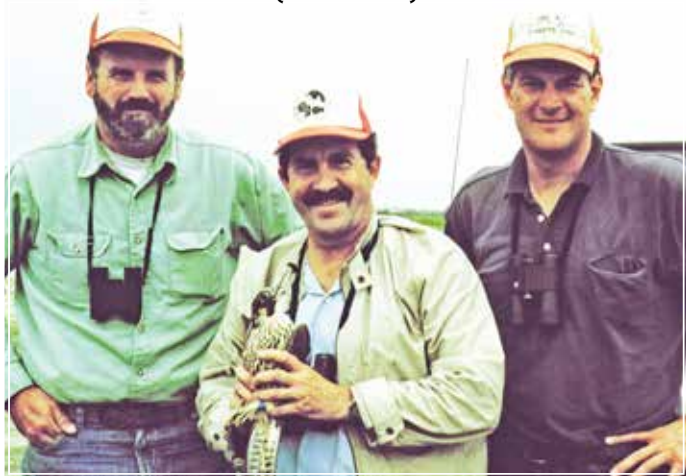
A Maryland native, I was able to trap peregrines at Assateague and on the Virginia and North Carolina



SCOTT WARD AND BOB BERRY



BRIAN McDONALD (1927-2018), DAVE JAMIESON, AND JIM RICE (1913-1989)



MIKE, SCOTT WARD, AND BILL SEEGAR

coasts for the final few years of their availability in the 1960s. My best game-hawk ever was a tundra falcon that ruled the Eastern Shore winter cornfields and ponds. I was fortunate enough to count as friends some of the early legends of eastern American falconry and beach trapping such as Al Nye, Jim Rice, Corny McFadden, Brian McDonald, Steve Gatti, Lou Woyce and Bob Berry. Steeped in the lore of beach trapping and the esteem of peregrines, I sought ways to be of service to them. When Bob moved to Wyoming and could no longer partner with Scott at Assateague in 1977 I stepped into his very large shoes. In 1981 Bill Seegar joined us and since Scott's departure in 1990, Bill and I have carried the torch. I first joined the Padre Island spring survey in 1982 and have directed that effort for the past 15 years. Ken Riddle turned the fall and spring surveys over to our sorely-missed brother Tom Maechtle in 1985, and Tom passed the fall baton to Gregg Doney two decades later.

My motivation in conducting these migration studies and spending parts of 14 summers with the Greenland survey was to assure that good data were available to document a hoped-for recovery and support a renewed harvest of peregrines for falconry. There was so much more in



TOM MAECHTLE (1958-2016) WITH SATELLITE-TAGGED HAGGARD TIERCEL

store, as the scope of the studies expanded with our imaginations and technology development. Bill Seegar launched a project in his Department of the Army day job that developed and miniaturized satellite-received transmitters for birds. The goal for us, of course, was to track peregrines globally. In 1984 a bald eagle was successfully tracked with a large prototype and in 1990 we were able to field the first weight and size-appropriate unit on a gyrfalcon in Greenland. In 1993 we began tracking peregrines with transmitters that relayed Doppler-derived location estimates via satellite. These were later followed



DRAWING BLOOD

by even smaller units that collected and relayed GPS locations by satellite and those that relayed those locations via cellular tower. In fielding almost a hundred such units at the migration surveys and in Alaska, Canada, Mexico, South America, Greenland and Russia we were able to define migration routes, strategies, and habitats critical to peregrines and associated species.

We collect blood and feather samples from migrating peregrines for investigating genetics, contaminants, and emerging pathogens. Our blood

SCOTT WARD AND JIM RICE





MIKE AND LOU WOYCE (1928-2009)

archive numbers in the thousands of samples, and is an invaluable resource in analyzing retrospectively the onset and progress of environmental threats. We employed samples to document the progressive reduction to insignificant levels of DDE (the

metabolite of DDT) in peregrine tissues. In recent years we have studied infectious pathogens such as West Nile Virus and Avian Influenza in partnership with U.S. Government entities. In partnership with Pete Jenny and the Peregrine Fund, we used our samples to document a significant spike in Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons from crude oil in peregrines after the 2010 Gulf oil spill. We recently documented mercury levels in virtually all peregrine feathers, and provided samples whose genetic diversity supported estimates of Arctic populations that far exceed those falconry harvest levels were originally based upon.

So how have those modest aspirations that set me and my colleagues on this path worked out? Our data are unparalleled and have been used to document the peregrine's recovery and its removal from the List of Endangered Species, representing the bulk of tundra peregrines banded within the continental United States since the establishment of the Bird Banding Laboratory by the Department of the Interior. Almost 55,000 man-hours have been expended in observing over 70,000 peregrines and capturing nearly 16,000. Based on our data we submitted comments in early 2008 on the harvest En-



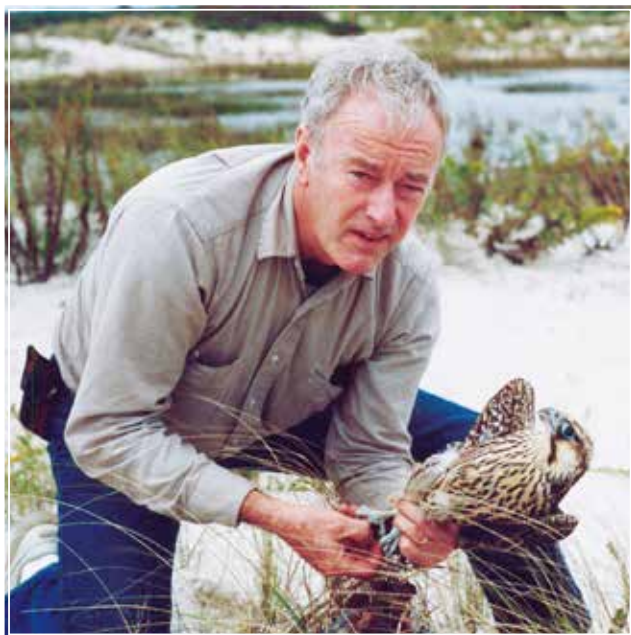
ABOVE: MIKE AT PADRE, SPRING 2019
BELOW: KAREN AND MIKE YATES AT ASSATEAGUE

vironmental Assessment that justified a liberal take of tundra peregrines by falconers. The Fish and Wildlife Service ultimately approved a much lower take, but in 2017 our continued studies allowed us to again confirm the sustainability of a much-increased harvest. The continuation of this work is critical to the falconry harvest plan, as long-term studies such as ours are essential to monitoring the stability of wildlife populations. This is particularly true in light of rapid changes that may occur due to contaminants, infectious diseases, habitat loss, climate change, and other factors. By the long-term and standardized nature of our studies, we have established levels of observation in stable populations that would quickly raise future concerns if not achieved over a several-year period. So long as tundra peregrine populations remain sustainable, our data provide the evidence that falconry harvest remains justified.

I never expected to amass a fortune in the pursuit of falconry and research,

None of the peregrine work could ever have been as successful had not most of the principals and volunteers themselves been falconers."

BILL MATTOX



RANDY TOWNSEND, SAM LINDBERG, AND TOM MAECHTLE



and thus have not been disappointed. The gratification I've received, however, has been more than ample compensation. The closest friendships and best experiences of my life have been shared with falconers, other biologists, and family in the field. Although I've sacrificed the best autumn game hawking window for the past 42 years in favor of the surveys, I have been otherwise rewarded by singular experiences and the knowledge of repaying the gifts falconry and the peregrine have given me. The seven day a week, 14-hour survey grind melts away when I am witness routinely to incredible pursuits by wild peregrines few ever have the chance to see. Sometimes I am even fortunate enough to be holding the performer in my hands minutes after the show. At Assateague in the fall and Padre in the spring Bill Seegar and I have seen and done what we could only have dreamed in our youth, and become brothers with each other and our survey peers. We've shared it all with some of our heroes (particularly Rice, McDonald and Woyce; I now carry some of Brian's ashes with me wherever I trap). We've also shared the experience and culture with our families and friends, and made converts and lasting friendships with like-minded locals along the way.



ABOVE: CATHERINE WIGHTMAN
BELOW: RUTH MUTCH



None of the peregrine work could ever have been as successful had not most of the principals and volunteers themselves been falconers. Who else would actually have done this without a profit motive? Every one of them has our sincere thanks, as do our stalwart supporters, most of whom are falconers or have strong falconry ties. Bob Berry, Jim Weaver, Willard Heck, Ruth Mutch, Chris Pfister, Pete Widener, Carl Thelander, Dwight Haldan, and the Peregrine Fund come immediately to mind. NAFA has for years given what it could through Small Grants, and the American Honda Motor Company and the Rockwell Foundation have helped with other needs. The Peregrine Fund and Earthspan have also recently embarked upon an expanded relationship to address common goals in partnership. 🦅

We would welcome your help as we conduct our 50th year of peregrine research.
See Earthspan's website: (www.earthspan.foundation) and our Padre Survey Facebook page: (<https://www.facebook.com/PadrelslandPeregrines/>), and we wish you the very best game hawking!

Editor's note: I would like to call upon all NAFA members to help support these people and donate what you can to this noble cause! These men and women have worked tirelessly **for decades** to preserve and study the peregrine falcon, so the least we can do is reach in our pockets to support their time and ongoing efforts. All donations are greatly appreciated and tax-deductible. **Your support matters.** Please help to assure the continuation of these programs with your tax-deductible donation to Earthspan (Tax ID 91-1662610). See above website to donate today.



ABOVE: MIKE AND BILL SEEGAR CLOSE DOWN THE SPRING 2019 PADRE SURVEY
BELOW: HIGH TIDE IN THE NARROWS AT SOUTH PADRE

