

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
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**RAPTOR ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY
FEDERAL AID PERFORMANCE REPORT**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.: W-27-5
PROJECT NR.: 8.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PERIOD: 1 July 2001-30 June 2002

PROJECT TITLE: The status of peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons and other raptors, and factors influencing their populations statewide.

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This statewide performance report includes raptor survey and inventory activities. Statewide activities are listed before specific activities by game management unit.

**The Status of Alaska Raptors
And Factors Influencing Their Populations**

Statewide Activities

Activity 1: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Performance report was prepared August 2002 and submitted to HQ in September 2002.

Activity 2: Analyze falconry reports and estimate the number of raptors taken from the wild.

Regional and headquarters staff, in coordination with US Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Management staff, collected reports from falconers. From January through early September 2002, 7 raptors were reported taken from the wild for falconry. This included 1 Arctic peregrine falcon, 2 gyrfalcons, 2 American kestrels and 2 northern goshawks.

Activities by Unit

Unit 20

Activity 1: Assist U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other cooperators in completion of the population survey of peregrine falcons on the Tanana River.

Biologists John Wright and Steve Dubois coordinated with Bob Ritchie, ABR Inc. and Hank Timm of Tetlin NWR to survey the Tanana River for American peregrine falcons in June 2002. Wright and Dubois surveyed from Fairbanks to Nenana, Ritchie from the Robertson River to Fairbanks, and Timm from Tetlin Crossing to Robertson River. Thirty-nine pairs and

4 single peregrines were observed at 43 sites. This was a decrease compared to 2001 when 44 pairs and 5 singles were counted, but similar to numbers seen from 1998-2000. The second half of April and early May was cooler and wetter than normal and many migrant birds were late, or lower in numbers in spring 2002.

Activity 2: Assist study of effects of snowshoe hare population cycles on demography of golden eagles.

Biologist Steve Arthur and NPS biologist Carol McIntyre conducted surveys of golden eagles in the Alaska Range between Dry Creek and Wood River, using helicopters, in April and June 2002. In April 2002, only 1 pair of incubating eagles was seen. In June 2002, no active nests were found; the 1 observed in April had been abandoned. Therefore, no successful nests of golden eagles were observed in 2002. In July 2000, 8 occupied nests were counted in the same area. Based on surveys of fecal pellets, the local population of snowshoe hares began a steep decline in 2000 and continued to decrease in 2002. In contrast, a higher proportion of Dall sheep lambs were counted in 2002 than in the previous 2 years. This was most likely due to a decline in coyotes and golden eagles in the study area.

Unit 22, 23, 26A and 26B

Activity 1: Conduct survey in June 2002 of cliff-nesting raptors in the Seward Peninsula near Nome

Biologists Peter Bente and Kate Persons completed surveys of cliff-nesting raptors using a R-44 helicopter in portions of Units 22C and 22D during June 2002. Preliminary results show 7 species were observed at 163 locations: Golden Eagle - 21 locations; Gyrfalcon - 36 locations; Peregrine Falcon - 5 locations; Rough-legged hawk - 67 locations; Osprey - 1 location (not nesting); Common Raven - 19 locations; and Canada Goose - 14 locations. Two species (raven and gyrfalcon) experienced extreme delays in nesting phenology, as some pairs were seen incubating eggs in mid-June when they normally would be rearing or fledging young. Several severe storms affecting the southern Seward Peninsula in late April and May probably caused early nest failures and the delayed phenology was the result of re-nesting by these species. For all raptor species combined, approximately 30% failed to nest successfully and this indicates breeding success was slightly lower than long-term trends for tundra nesting species. Of interest was the high number of geese nesting in stick-nests built by eagles and rough-legs. Geese often use empty stick-nests on cliffs but this year the number of nests is unusual and represents the highest number of geese found on surveys in recent years. Extensive snow cover may have displaced geese from tundra nesting areas to snow-free cliff nesting areas for this portion of the Seward Peninsula.

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project: None.

Total Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands) = \$36.6

Statewide Project Costs (in thousands):

State Share = \$9.1 Federal Share = \$27.5 Total Costs = \$36.6

Submitted by: John Wright, Wildlife Biologist III