

NEWS RELEASE

u.s. department of the interior

national park service

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ENDANGERED PEREGRINE FALCONS SUCCESSFULLY BREED

IN ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

Robert Reynolds, Superintendent of Acadia National Park, announced today that peregrine falcons have successfully nested again within Acadia National Park. Peregrine chicks have been sighted on a ledge on the south side of Mount Desert Island's Champlain Mountain adjacent to the popular hiking and climbing areas known as the Precipice. The precipice has been closed since late March following the return of the adult falcons. This marks the first known successful breeding of peregrines in Maine this year.

Peregrine falcons once nested throughout North America but were extinct east of the Mississippi and endangered in the western U.S. by the 1960's. This was primarily due to the ingestion of DDT, a widely used pesticide that caused these birds to lay eggs with thin shells. Before the eggs were ready to hatch, shells broke and partially developed chicks died. Peregrines have historically nested within Acadia with the last documented effort in 1956. In the mid-1980's, over twenty young peregrine falcons were successfully released back into the wild from a hack site within the park. Although birds have returned to the Precipice area for the past several years, successful breeding did not occur until last year. Since 1984, 111 peregrine falcon chicks have been raised and released in Maine. In 1991, however, only six known pairs of peregrines attempted to breed within the state. These six pairs produced a total of 10 young.

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The peregrine falcon reintroduction effort is a cooperative venture among the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Peregrine Fund. The National Park Service and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife will continue to monitor these birds to learn more about post-breeding behavior and habits while they remain in Acadia. According to Charles Todd, Maine's statewide coordinator of the Peregrine Falcon Reintroduction Program, "the breeding success of the falcons in Acadia marks great progress toward the peregrine reintroduction effort along the entire Atlantic coast of both the United States and Canada. Private donations from the Chickadee Check-off on the Maine State Income Tax Form have helped significantly in the effort to bring the Peregrine back to Acadia and Maine.

The peregrine falcon is a Federally designated "Endangered Species," and it is a violation of Federal law under the **Endangered Species Act of 1973**, to take, possess, or harm these birds in any way. In order to comply with the provisions of the Endangered Species Act, Acadia National Park will prohibit any activities that may endanger these birds. As a result, the Precipice Trail will remain closed throughout much of the summer to provide the peregrines every opportunity to raise their young. Violation of the Endangered Species Act carries a maximum fine of \$20,000 and up to a year in jail. **Park rangers plan to strictly enforce the public closure of the Precipice area.**

On Mondays and Tuesdays throughout July, the National Park Service will provide an on-site interpreter and spotting scopes located in the Precipice Trail parking lot to allow the public a chance to view Acadia's newest natural resource. Check the park newspaper or call the Visitor Center at 288-4932 for specific times.