

Rocky Mountain Region

The only wild population of black-footed ferrets in the world was established in the Shirley Basin of Wyoming last summer when about 50 ferrets were released from a captive population. This was the first of several planned releases in the recovery program for the species. The next release is scheduled for the summer of 1992 in northern Montana followed by a proposed release in 1993 in Badlands NP. The last known wild ferrets were discovered and captured a few years ago in western Wyoming, sometime after it was thought the species was extinct.

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The FWS has published a proposed rule to list the Mexican spotted owl as a threatened species (Fed. Reg. Vol. 56 No. 213, 11/4/91). RMR parks participated in the status review for the subspecies and have been conducting spotted owl surveys for several years. Zion NP completed a third year of Mexican spotted owl surveys in 1991 (funded by the RMR). Twenty-one birds representing at least 8 pairs of spotted owls were observed. Owl pairs reared at least 7 young in Zion NP this season. Limited surveys revealed at least 5 spotted owls in Capitol Reef NP, 2 owls in Canyonlands NP, and 2 owls in Glen Canyon NRA.

Work by the USFS and park staff revealed a nesting pair of spotted owls that successfully reared young in Mesa Verde NP. A home range and habitat use study of Mexican spotted owls on the Colorado Plateau was begun this season. This is an interagency project involving the FWS, BLM, the State of Utah and NPS. The project is being conducted by Charles van Riper and David Willey out of the CPSU at Northern Arizona Univ. Park and RMR staff are participating in interagency efforts to coordinate management, surveys and research on the subspecies. Mike Britten of the RMRO is coordinating spotted owl work in the Region.

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The RMR has completed 3 years of intensive fieldwork towards the recovery of peregrine falcon populations. Survey efforts in 1991 documented breeding peregrine falcons in 15 park areas, including 60 – territories in Glen Canyon NRA, 11 each in Dinosaur NM and Zion NP, 7 in Yellowstone NP, 6 each in Capitol Reef NP and Canyonlands NP, and 4 in Bryce Canyon NP. The NPS supported a final release effort (5 birds successfully released) of captive reared young peregrines in Bighorn Canyon NRA. At least one adult peregrine was sighted in Bighorn Canyon this past summer.

Glacier NP, where peregrines once nested, had several encouraging but unconfirmed observations made by visitors this season. The Recovery Team is currently working on an Addendum to the Rocky Mountain Southwest Peregrine Falcon Recovery Plan to reclassify the species to reflect this peregrine population explosion.

The peregrine falcon program at Black Canyon of the Gunnison NM is typical of smaller park units in the RMR. In 1991 surveys in the NM revealed 2 nesting pair

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occupying historic territories on the "Painted Wall" and near "Red Rock Canyon"; 6 peregrine chicks fledged from the 2 eyries.

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The RMR is conducting a Bighorn Sheep Initiative with the primary goal of re-establishing the bighorn to 18 National Parks, Monuments and Recreation Areas. Seven scientific committees made up of conservation biologists, population ecologists, veterinarians, and bighorn sheep experts are conducting a problem analysis for the involved park areas. Look for a **Park Science** article on the Initiative. Frank Singer, currently at Colorado State University, is coordinating the project.

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In late August 1991, Yellowstone NP hosted three visiting scientists from Russia as part of their 3-week tour of the Greater Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide Ecosystems. The scientists were invited by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee to view occupied grizzly bear habitat and discuss with NPS, state, and USFS biologists techniques for managing bear-human conflicts. Despite the fact that their day in Yellowstone coincided with the beginning of the aborted coup attempt in the USSR, the scientists had a successful visit and were lucky enough to observe a grizzly bear sow with cubs in the park.

Grizzly bear reproduction exceeded target goals again in 1991 for the greater Yellowstone area. In 1990 a record number of cubs was observed in the GYA; 23 sows produced 57 cubs, including one litter of 4. The recovery goal is to average 15 sows with "cubs of the year." In 1991, 24 sows were observed with 43 cubs of

the year. These higher figures could represent increased reproduction in the population, or they could mirror an increased effort to observe sows with cubs.