



The peregrine falcon is currently listed as an endangered species by the state of Florida. It was de-listed federally in 1999, the same year that the FWC received a petition to de-list the species. In 2007, the Commission directed staff to move forward with the petition and appointed a Biological Review Panel to evaluate the status under Phase I of the FWC listing process. The recommendations of the biological review panel are presented here.

The peregrine falcon is well known for its spectacular aerial dives to capture prey.

Phase I of the listing process – Biological status assessment

- Petition received, direction to evaluate status
- Biological Review Panel of scientists approved at June 2007 meeting
- Draft report reviewed by independent experts
- Final report completed and presented at Commission meeting



The listing process has two phases. Phase I assesses the status of a species and identifies the risk of extinction. Phase II is development of a management plan to serve as a conservation blueprint for managing the species. Phase I of the listing process requires the use of Florida specific data, measurable biological criteria, use of a biological review panel, and independent scientific peer-review of the biological assessment.

The process is initiated with the receipt of a petition. At the June 2007 Commission meeting, the Commission approved membership of the peregrine falcon Biological Review Panel. A 45-day public comment period was held in the summer of 2007 to solicit information about the biological status of the peregrine falcon in Florida. The Biological Review Panel met in December 2007, conducted a biological assessment, and drafted the preliminary biological status report. The draft biological status report was then reviewed by independent scientists, finalized, and is being presented to the Commission for consideration.

Listing criteria

- A – population trend
- B – range and critical habitat areas
- C – combination of population trend, population size, and other factors
- D – number of mature individuals
- E – probability of extinction (model projections)



Listing criteria are used in Florida to identify species with at least a moderate risk of extinction (definition for species of special concern). The criteria are designed to identify species that are at risk of extinction by capturing various risk factors that can affect the wide diversity of plant and animal species. Data about the population status of the peregrine falcon was evaluated against FWC's five listing criteria which are summarized here. A species must meet specific thresholds for the five criteria to be classified as a species of special concern, threatened (defined as a species with a very high risk of extinction), or endangered (species in imminent risk of extinction). The species need meet the threshold for only one of the criteria for any of the listing categories to be classified at that level. In other words, a species is listed at the most imperiled level for which it meets any **one** criterion.

- Criterion A evaluates whether there is a population decline occurring and at what rate. This criterion recognizes that a species that continues to decline is at risk of extinction, and the more steep the rate of decline, the greater the risk.
- Criterion B evaluates the species' range and amount of critical habitat available, called Extent of Occurrence and Area of Occupancy, respectively. This criterion recognizes that species with a limited range or habitat type are more at risk of extinction.
- Criterion C evaluates population trend and population size with compounding factors. This criterion recognizes that low population levels, coupled with other factors such as a continuing decline, or a fragmented population, are correlated with an increased risk of extinction.
- Criterion D evaluates whether a species has a small or restricted population. This criterion recognizes that extremely low population levels are correlated with an increased risk of extinction.
- Criterion E – Probability of Extinction, recognizes that species that have been modeled to have a high probability of extinction regardless of the cause, are correlated with a high probability of extinction.

Peregrine falcon status assessment

- Population trend – appears to be increasing
- The falcon ranges world-wide with two sub-species migrating through Florida
- At least 3,800 adult pairs occur in the United States
- None of the five listing criteria were met for any listing category, nor were they met when the regional guidelines were applied
- Report conclusion to de-list the falcon was supported by all independent reviewers



The peregrine falcon, like other birds, was significantly impacted by pesticides such that it was listed as endangered by both the FWC and the USFWS in the early 1970s. With the banning of pesticides such as DDT, and proactive management activities such as translocations of individuals, the peregrine falcon populations increased during the 1980s and 1990s. The total number of peregrines in North America is not known but the trend appears to be increasing and the estimates of numbers range from 3,800-9,800 pairs. The peregrine falcon occurs almost world-wide. The falcon is a regular migrant in Florida during the fall and spring. The species has not been documented to breed in Florida. While there are threats that could cause a future decline, there is no documented reason to suggest this is likely if the species is appropriately protected. The peregrine falcon does not currently meet any of the criteria for listing, and the review panel unanimously agreed de-listing was appropriate. All independent peer-reviewers agreed the information used was appropriate and the conclusion to de-list the species was reasonable.

Staff recommendations

- Having considered the biological status report, independent scientific reviews, and public comment, make a final determination that removing the peregrine falcon from Rule 27.003 (endangered species list) is warranted.
- Direct staff to move to phase II of the listing process, development of the management plan
- Due date for completion of peregrine falcon management plan – June 2009

