

## Historic Nest Record of the Peregrine Falcon In Pickens County, S.C.

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The historic breeding range of the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) extended south to the southern Appalachians, including South Carolina (Brewster, 1886; Loomis, 1890; Herbert et al., 1943; Sprunt and Chamberlain, 1949; Hickey, 1969). Only one proven breeding record exists in South Carolina, at Caesar's Head, Greenville County, where young were heard in the nest when they were being fed by the adults in April 1933 (Sprunt and Chamberlain, 1949). Presumptive breeding occurred at this site in earlier years and also at Table Rock, Pickens County, based on evidence of adults present at suitable ledges during the breeding season (op. cit.). However, no nest and eggs of Peregrine Falcon have been reported in South Carolina recently at either site, and any further information on historic breeding is valuable.

Four fresh eggs of the Peregrine Falcon were collected on 9 April 1884 'on a ledge of high rocks,' Pickens County, by an unknown individual for Samuel B. Ladd, a noted oologist from Pennsylvania. This set was in the collection of Charles E. Doe, another reputable oologist, by about 1906 (T. Webber, pers. comm.). The set is now in the collection of the Florida State Museum (Cat. No. UF 2452). Measurements of the four eggs (to the nearest 0.1 mm) are: 55.3 x 40.5, 52.9 x 39.7, 52.6 x 40.9, and 51.9 x 40.7. A color photograph of the set of four eggs, on Kodachrome 64, is on permanent file at the Charleston Museum.

Unfortunately, the exact collecting site for this egg set is not known, but the site is almost certainly Table Rock (950 m) because this is the only known suitable breeding locality in Pickens County. Loomis (1890) reported three birds present here in June 1889. The individual who collected the egg set is also unknown. However, both Ladd and Doe were reliable oologists, and the handwriting on the egg data slip which accompanies the egg set is Ladd's, which suggests he was confident the record was reliable.

In addition, Brewster (1886) found Peregrine Falcons nesting at every suitable ledge on rocky cliffs in nearby North Carolina in 1885, just one year later than the egg set collected in Pickens County, South Carolina. Other historical evidence also indicates Peregrine Falcons were widespread as breeding birds in the southern Appalachians at this time (op. cit.). Assuming an incubation period of 34 days and egg-laying every other day (Harrison, 1975), back-dating indicates the first egg of the set from Pickens County would have been laid around 27 February, which roughly agrees with data from Georgia and the Carolinas (op. cit.).

Bechard (1981) also used historic nest records of Peregrine Falcons in egg collections to provide evidence that Peregrine Falcons nested in areas they no longer use for breeding. The only documented nests from southern Manitoba and the entire province of Saskatchewan, Canada, are based on oological records. Thus, the value of documentation is once again demonstrated.

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