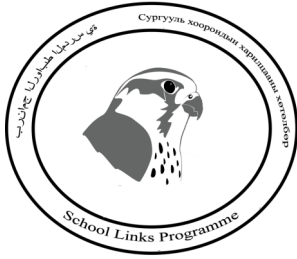


## Fact Sheet



# Falcons

### Falcon Facts

A falcon is any one of 37 species of raptor in the genus *Falco*, widely distributed on all continents of the world except Antarctica.

Falcons are powerful, fast flyers. Adult falcons have thin tapered wings, which enable them to fly at high speed and to change direction rapidly.

All falcons kill with their beaks, utilizing a "tooth" on the side of their beak

As is the case with many birds of prey, falcons have exceptional powers of vision; the visual acuity of one species has been measured at 2.6 times that of a normal human .

A male falcon is approximately one third smaller than the female .

Falcons do not build their own nests

Peregrine falcons have been recorded diving at speeds of 200 miles per hour (320 km/h), making them the fastest-moving creatures on Earth .

The traditional term for a male falcon is tercel from latin tertius

### Falcons commonly used for Falconry

- Gyr falcon
- Saker falcon
- Peregrine falcon
- Merlin
- Lanner falcon



The gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) is the largest of the falcon species. The gyrfalcon breeds on Arctic coasts and the islands of North America, Europe, and Asia. Its plumage varies with location, with birds being coloured from all-white to dark brown. For centuries, gyrfalcon has been a precious hunting bird, highly valued among the Vikings. It is the national symbol of Iceland.

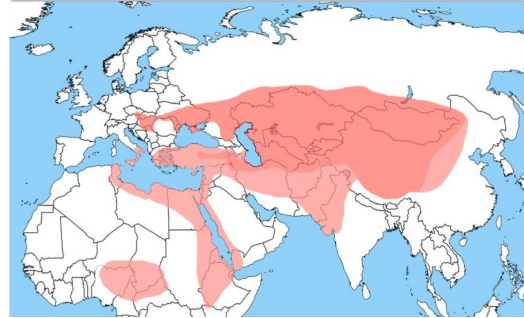
The gyrfalcon almost invariably nests on cliff faces. Breeding pairs do not build their own nests, and often use a bare cliff ledge or the abandoned nest of other birds, particularly golden eagles and common ravens. The clutch can range from 1 to 5 eggs, but is usually 2 to 4.

Females are approx. 51 to 65 cm long, 124 to 160 cm wingspan, and of 1180 to 2100 g in weight.



Saker falcons are large falcons exhibiting predominantly dark brown plumage above, whilst the underparts are generally white in appearance with dark brown spots or streaks, typically lighter on the breast and heavier on the flanks. The Saker is polymorphic, which means that individuals can vary in size, shape and plumage colour.

Female : length: 55 cm, wingspan: 120 - 130cm, weight: 970 - 1,300 g



This distribution map shows the breeding range in dark red and the wintering areas in lighter red.

Peregrine falcons are one of, if not the, fastest animals in the world. They are believed to achieve speeds of over 300 kph when plunging from the sky after prey. This iconic bird of prey is also one of the world's most widely distributed birds, found on every continent except Antarctica. Peregrines prefer open landscapes, but are increasingly exploiting towns and cities where there are tall buildings for nesting and plenty of pigeons for prey. Unlucky victims are captured in vicious talons after a lightning dive from above, but the killing stroke is delivered by the deadly beak.

It has long, broad, pointed wings and a relatively short tail. It is blue-grey above, with a blackish top of the head and an obvious black 'moustache' that contrasts with its white face.



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The merlin (*Falco columbarius*) is a small species of falcon from the Northern Hemisphere. A bird of prey once known colloquially as a pigeon hawk in North America. The merlin is 24–33 cm ( long with a 50–73 cm wingspan.[5] Compared with most other small falcons, it is more robust and heavily built . Most of its populations are migratory, wintering in warmer regions. Northern European birds move to southern Europe and North Africa, and North American populations to the southern USA to northern South America. Breeding occurs typically in May/June. Most nest sites have dense vegetative or rocky cover; the merlin does not build a proper nest of its own. Most will use abandoned crow or magpie which are in conifer or mixed tree stands. In moorland—particularly in the UK—the female will usually make a shallow scrape in dense heather to use as a nest. Others nest in crevices on cliff-faces and on the ground, and some may even use buildings