

PEREGRINE FALCON LANDS AT PRAIRIE PARK NATURE CENTER AS A PERMANENT DISPLAY

Lawrence Parks and Recreation Department's Prairie Park Nature Center has received a peregrine falcon for its Birds of Prey Collection. The falcon was recently received from the California Foundation for Birds of Prey in Roseville, Calif.

The falcon is approximately 10 years old. It is a rehabilitated bird, having been shot in its wing at the age of 4 years old when it was in the wild. It has spent the past 6 years at the California Foundation for Birds of Prey where it has been used in programming. The center housed several peregrine falcons and had sought placement at other centers for a few of its birds.

Because of display considerations and caging needs for the bird, the falcon will not be on display to the public, but it will be used extensively for programs.

The process for acquiring this peregrine falcon began more than 6 months ago, which was started shortly after Kyrie, the nature center's previous peregrine falcon, had died from cancer of the preening gland.

The application process to acquire birds of prey is often lengthy. Birds first have to be applied for from the agency in which they are housed. After meeting their standards, approval must be given from the regional offices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a Bureau in the Department of Interior, in the region where the bird is from, as well as where it will be sent.

Marty Birrell, nature interpretive supervisor, said the replacement falcon enhances the collection at the nature center.

"We were extremely pleased to receive this peregrine to replace Kyrie," Birrell said. "It (the peregrine falcon) represents a lot of conservation history, much like the bald eagle. It has recovered nicely from being on the endangered species list. However, it hasn't been as great as the bald eagle population recovery has been.

"There are several reasons for this. First it has a lower reproduction rate than the eagle and continues to migrate to areas that still use DDT, like South America."



The peregrine is still considered a threatened species. Birrell said while the eagle begins reproducing around the age of 4 years old, the peregrine reaches sexual maturity at 1 to 2 years of age, but commonly doesn't nest until they are older. She said the peregrine is rare to the State of Kansas, but that there are a few known peregrines nesting in the state.

The peregrine falcon is a nomadic-type bird and likes to travel until it reaches maturity. It isn't home to just one region but can be found on all over the world on all continents. The word peregrine means traveler, Birrell said.

Peregrine falcons are the fastest bird in the world, reaching speed of more than 200 miles per hour, and they live up to 20 years.

"They are the jet plane of the bird world," Birrell said. Currently, the peregrine falcon at Prairie Park is unnamed but nature center staff are currently taking suggestions.