



Peregrine Falcon Gender Identification Guide



The Hawk and Owl Trust
Norwich Cathedral Peregrine Project
Main sponsor 2013: Viking Optical



The Hawk and Owl Trust's peregrine webcams at Norwich Cathedral gave unique and captivating views of the peregrine nest activity during 2012. However, it's not always easy for those watching the images on camera to spot the differences between the adult male (tercel) and his female (falcon) partner.

Although there is a significant universal difference in size between the adult male and female peregrines – the male is only around 70% of the size of the female – this is not always obvious on camera. If one peregrine is closer to the camera than the other it will appear that the closer one is larger, even if that closer bird is the male. It can also be difficult to identify the gender of the bird by its size when there is only one of the pair in the box. When both are present and are a similar distance from the camera – not a common occurrence - a reasonable size comparison can be made.



Size Comparison: Female left, male right.

Male and female peregrines have similar, but not identical, feather patterns. The differences are subtle but some can be seen when the peregrine is in the box and close to the camera. A peregrine facing the camera will show its breast feathers. These are white but the female has a 'spotted' zone above the abdominal area. The images below show this.



Female left, male right.

The amount of light on the breast feathers can have an affect on the visibility of the spots. In bright sunlight the spots may not be visible. This is because the camera is trying to adjust its auto-exposure settings to cover a wide range of 'brightness' (at the expense of contrast detail) rather than the spots themselves having actually faded.

Perhaps more obvious are the differences in feather patterns on the peregrine's back. The male peregrine's back feathers are a reasonably uniform slate grey in appearance whereas the female is more 'mottled', and a slightly lighter shade. See below, female left and male right.



Female left, male right.

The Norwich pair show other differences. Compared to her mate, the female has quite a pronounced 'peninsula' of white feathers adjacent to her dark grey 'moustache' below the eye. This is mainly because her grey 'collar' extends further forward than it does on the male. See below. Female left, male right.



Peregrine Falcon - Facts and Figures

Adult weight:	Female: 1100 grams	Male: 670 grams
Wing Span:	Female: 110cm	Male: 95cm
Length:	Female: 48cm	Male: 41cm

Eggs

Laying date: 23 Mar to 28 Apr. Typical clutch: 3 – 4. Colour: mottled brown-red. Size: 41x52mm
Weight: 48g. Broods: 1. Incubation: 31-34 days.

Juvenile

Hatching to fledging: ~40 days. 1st year survival rate: 55%. Age to 1st breeding: 2 yrs.

Adult

Status: resident breeder, Passage/winter visitor. UK population (summer): 1500 pairs (2005). Average Life expectancy: 6 years. UK Conservation status: recovering from Amber. Known for: being the fastest bird in the world; in excess of 150mph in a dive.

Source: BTO