

Introduction

Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus macropus* are predators that hunt other birds and kill their prey at the end of spectacular high speed dives called “stoops”. Peregrines do not build their own nest (eyrie) and normally lay eggs in a scrape on a cliff ledge. Peregrines are listed as “rare” across Australia and “vulnerable” in Victoria. Of the 642 Peregrine nests ever found in Australia, more than one third (275) are in Victoria. The Victorian Peregrine Project (VPP) is a unique and exciting voluntary conservation project involving more than 300 people across Victoria. Over 500 volunteer days are invested per year. The support of sponsors is both very much appreciated and essential to the continued success of this project.

The VPP is an exciting volunteer conservation initiative combining three key areas of activity: Field research; community engagement and education; and developing innovative management techniques.

Research Results

A major component of the VPP has been colour banding nestlings and since 1991 a total of 1,687 chicks have been banded and 200 (12%) of these have been resighted later in life. World wide most raptor banding studies fail to gain more than a 7% reporting rate of birds after banding.

Another important component of banding raptors is taking into account the significant size difference between the sexes. Females are so much larger than males that they require a larger band size. This size difference is referred to as Reversed Sexual Dimorphism (RSD) and is evident even amongst nestlings. This has lead to the VPP developing a mathematical formula for predicting the sex of nestlings from as early as 15 days after egg hatching. This is done by taking measurements of several body parts wing length, leg bone length, head plus bill length and using these in the formula to determine a probability of the sex of each nestling. Also because the wing length of nestlings increases at a standard rate regardless of sex or nutritional state than nestlings can be aged upon wing length alone. The graph below provides a clear illustration of the non-linear growth curve of both males and females. This is one of many innovations that the VPP has developed and will be publishing from this project.

Weight Vs Wing Length

