



# NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

USDA FOREST SERVICE, 160A ZILICOA STREET, ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

## NEWS • RELEASE

February 18, 2009

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### **Agencies Seek Climbers' Support as Raptor Marks Ten Years Off Endangered Species List**

Ten years ago the peregrine falcon, the world's fastest bird, was removed from the threatened and endangered species list and wildlife biologists look to rock climbers as a key part of the bird's continued success in Western North Carolina.

Though it ranges across much of North America, the peregrine falcon is not common and in North Carolina it nests in the western part of the state, atop the high, broad cliffs often used by rock climbers.

"The peregrine falcon is an endangered species success story," remarked Chris Kelly, a biologist with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. "Key to that success has been the willingness of rock climbers to make concessions for the birds and we hope area rock climbers will continue to be a part of the success."

Seven of the 13 known nesting sites in Western North Carolina are on National Forests, and each year during the breeding season, the USDA Forest Service restricts access to these areas, which are often popular with rock climbers. Biologists implore climbers to heed the closure signs. Adult birds may abandon a nest if molested while older nestlings are especially sensitive to disturbance and may bolt off a ledge before they can fly if approached by a climber. This makes late spring, when visitation at the cliffs tends to increase, an especially critical time for nestlings.

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“We understand the sacrifice made by the rock climbers for the birds,” explained Sandy Burnet with the USDA Forest Service. “We appreciate that sacrifice and hope they know they’re contributing to the peregrine’s success – that their contribution helps keep this bird from returning to the endangered species list.”

The 2009 closures will run from January 15 to August 15. If falcons aren’t using a site or nesting finishes earlier than August 15, the site may be opened to the public. Likewise, if the falcons chose a nest site outside the existing closed area, the new area may be closed. Areas currently closed include:

<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Area Closed</b>	<b>Forest Service Ranger District</b>
Whiteside Mountain	All climbing routes between and including Southwest Arete and Mainline are closed.	USFS, Nantahala Ranger District (828) 524-6441
NC Wall (Linville Gorge)	All climbing routes between and including Tightrope and Bumblebee Buttress are closed	USFS, Grandfather Ranger District (828) 652-2144
Shortoff Mountain (Linville Gorge)	All climbing routes between and including C.O. to and including Paradigm Shift are closed.	USFS, Grandfather Ranger District (828) 652-2144
Big Lost Cove Cliffs	All climbing routes are closed.	USFS, Grandfather Ranger District (828) 652-2144
Looking Glass Rock (North Face)	All routes to the right* of Glass Menagerie and to the left of and including Twisted Laurel on the North Face of Looking Glass Rock are closed.	USFS, Pisgah Ranger District (828) 877-3350
Whiterock Cliff and Eagle Cliff	All climbing routes are closed	USFS, Appalachian Ranger District (828) 682-6146

\* As seen from the base of Looking Glass Rock  
*Climbing route names are taken from: Kelly, Thomas. 1995. The Climber’s Guide to North Carolina 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Earthbound Sports Inc., Chapel Hill, NC 332pp. A poster depicting closed areas and a list of corresponding route names from Lambert and Shull (2002. Selected Climbs in North Carolina. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. The Mountaineers Books. Seattle, WA. 326pp.) are posted at the North Face trailhead kiosk. A poster depicting closed areas at Whiteside Mountain is posted at the kiosk in the USFS parking lot.*

A complete list of closed climbing routes is posted at [www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc](http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc) and [www.carolinaclimbers.org](http://www.carolinaclimbers.org), the website of the Carolina Climbers' Coalition.

The peregrine is a crow-sized raptor that nests on tall cliffs, or even urban skyscrapers. It feeds on other birds and has been known to reach speeds up to 200 miles per hour diving after prey. Its numbers declined sharply after World War II due to the widespread use of DDT and other organochlorine pesticides. In 1970 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service placed the falcon on the endangered species list under the Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969, the precursor to the current Endangered Species Act.

In 1975 North American peregrine numbers reached an all time low of 324 nesting pairs. The banning of DDT in the United States in 1973 laid the foundation for peregrine recovery which included the captive breeding and subsequent release of more than 6000 birds in the U.S and Canada between 1974 and 1999, including 92 in western North Carolina.. When it was removed from the list of threatened and endangered species in 1999, there were at least 1650 breeding pairs. While steady, peregrine numbers in the state are not large, with only 10-13 pairs seen each year. Peregrines mate for life and tend to return to the same area each year to mate and nest. They nest once a year, and due to strong territoriality, each cliff site will support only one pair of birds. If the birds abandon the nest or otherwise fail to nest, a year of reproduction is lost.



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