

Cape Horn Seasonal Peregrine Falcon Closure

February 1 through July 15

Ensures Their Continuing Presence

Peregrine falcons have called the cliffs at Cape Horn home for at least a century, and undoubtedly, longer. A medium-sized raptor (*about the size of a crow*), the peregrine dives down from the sky at speeds around 200 mph to stun its prey, mostly other birds, in mid-air.

Survey data show that Cape Horn is an essential breeding area for peregrines on the Washington side of the Gorge. There are fewer natural “core” eyries on the north side of the Columbia River when compared to the Oregon side. The peregrines use over a one-mile stretch of cliff along Cape Horn for all their breeding activities: *courtship, mating, patrolling, foraging, killing and caching prey, continued pair bonding & maintenance, nesting, and rearing young*. One pair maintains permanent residence here at Cape Horn.

The Cape Horn peregrine falcons are highly sensitive to human activity, *including nearby human presence and/or noise disturbance*, during their critical breeding period. The critical months in the Gorge are February 1 through July 15.

At a minimum, close human activity can make the Cape Horn adult peregrines expend a great deal of energy during the breeding season being concerned about their eyrie location, their eggs, their young, or themselves. Peregrines will silently fly-by trail hikers to check out new activity within their breeding territory.

At a maximum, nearby human activity can make peregrines stay away from their eyrie for excessive periods of time, which can result in chilled eggs or young, abandonment of their eyrie or egg incubation duties – hence they can lose their clutch (*nest of eggs*). Indeed, peregrines are wired, “high-strung” raptors, and keep watch over their territory, including land, river and air spaces.

Peregrine falcons do not always select the exact spot to breed year after year. Part of their strategy for breeding success is locating a cryptic spot to nest that is secure from intruders. We’ve found Cape Horn peregrines nesting in various locations over the years across the mile-long cliffs. So the point at which the trail is closed may change from year to year as the peregrines change their nest site.

Please honor this seasonal trail closure and give the peregrines their space. Unlike the Beacon Rock and Portland bridge peregrines, which are limited to smaller breeding areas, the Cape Horn peregrines have a larger area from which to select an eyrie. Let’s allow them the opportunity to keep their options open in selecting a nest site and not limit them to only one or two secure spots. *Let’s not fence them in or pinch them out.*

The peregrine falcon symbolizes majestic wildlife at its most intense and spectacular. You can help ensure that the peregrine falcons continue to call Cape Horn home by heeding the information posted at trail locations, staying behind the barricades, respecting their space to breed, and letting other people know about this very special bird and this extraordinary place.

The Forest Service values the partnership with **Cape Horn Conservancy**: its dedication to service, swiftness to action, responsiveness to habitat degradation, and respect for the other life forms that call Cape Horn home.



**Cape Horn
Peregrine Falcon *female***

Photograph by
Cape Horn Conservancy



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