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Peregrine Falcons and their Status along the Hudson River and in New York State

Peregrine falcons have existed for centuries along the Hudson River and in New York State. By the early 1960s, the peregrine population completely died out in eastern North America and sharply declined everywhere else in the world due to the use of DDT, a pesticide that caused eggshell thinning. A recovery program of captive-breeding and release was implemented in the 1970s under the Endangered Species Act; as a result the population in New York has increased, but the peregrine still remains on the endangered list in New York. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 was pivotal in the recovery of the peregrine falcon. The two main aspects of the ESA that helped the peregrines were the requirements to develop a recovery plan and to designate critical habitat.

Today, the peregrine falcon still faces many threats, including possibly deca-BDE, a flame retardant used in computers, television sets, and furniture, which causes neurological problems in test subjects. While testing for deca-BDE has been done on peregrines, the results are not yet public. By looking at outliers in the number of young produced and trying to determine what factors caused the number of young to either increase or decrease, one can apply this knowledge to aid not only the recovery of the peregrines but also potentially other species. While the population of peregrine falcons in New York has increased dramatically since its extirpation in the late 1950s, more work needs to be done to determine if the peregrine falcon can ever be down- or de-listed and to ensure its long-term survival.