



Wild Explorers

peregrine falcon

LEARNING & ACTIVITY PACK

Teacher Notes

Thank you for taking an interest in the fabulous falcons that we are so lucky to have in Derbyshire!

Despite recent population successes, these birds remain vulnerable due to continuing persecution and egg thefts. Educating our children and their families is critical in gaining a wider awareness, appreciation and the conservation of these brilliant birds.

This pack contains both information sheets and activities that will suit different abilities and ages.

Could you have a Peregrine Project Enrichment Day?

Your school could help raise valuable funds to allow Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to undertake our important work in your local area.

We'd be delighted if you could consider making an event that combined with making a crucial contribution to conservation?

See our *Fundraising Ideas* sheet in this pack for some inspiration!

The Peregrine Project website has all manner of useful links including access to **live webcams** allow you to watch the peregrines as they incubate the eggs and subsequently raise their chicks.



This pack was produced in collaboration with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Learning Through Nature educators. Some text has been sourced or adapted from the wildlife trust website.

All other text, content and images are created by Colin Marshall, Creator of Living World Education, copyright 2024.

www.livingworldeducation.com

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CITY LIVING



Like many of our birds of prey, the peregrine falcon was so persecuted, numbers fell dramatically. Thankfully, this super-speedy flyer is now making a comeback, particularly in our towns, where it nests on tall buildings.

At the rear of Derby Cathedral, there you can find excellent views of the nesting platform.

Nesting platform

The **Derby Cathedral peregrines** can be seen from the ground by going to **Cathedral Green**, behind the Cathedral, and looking up with binoculars.

They also often perch on the lettering on signs of a hotel nearby and are sometimes clearly visible as you drive into Derby on the A52.

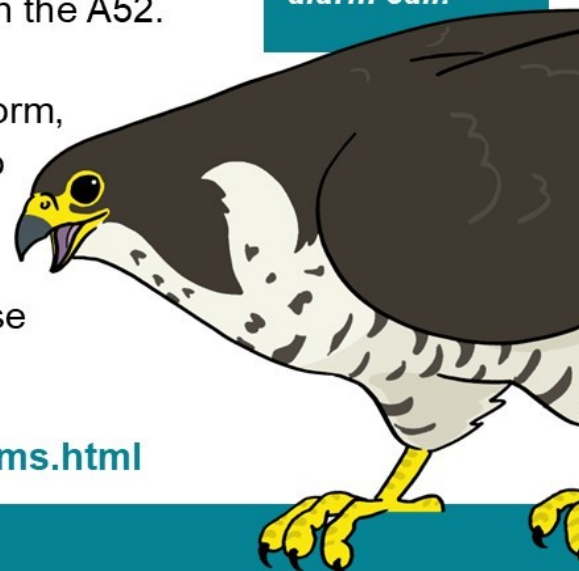
When the chicks show above the front of the nest platform, we run regular **'Watch Point' events** providing free to use telescopes, so visitors get a close up view.

However, by far the best way to catch a glimpse of these birds is via the **webcams** from home or school.

<https://derbyperegrines.blogspot.com/p/our-webcams.html>

LISTEN!

The adult birds make a distinct "Kak kak kak" alarm call.



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FALCON FACTS



Nest site at
Banks Mill,
Belper



Banks Mill in Belper, Derbyshire, provide high, flat ledges where the falcons nest. The large population of resident pigeons and many water birds also offer a great supply of peregrine prey.

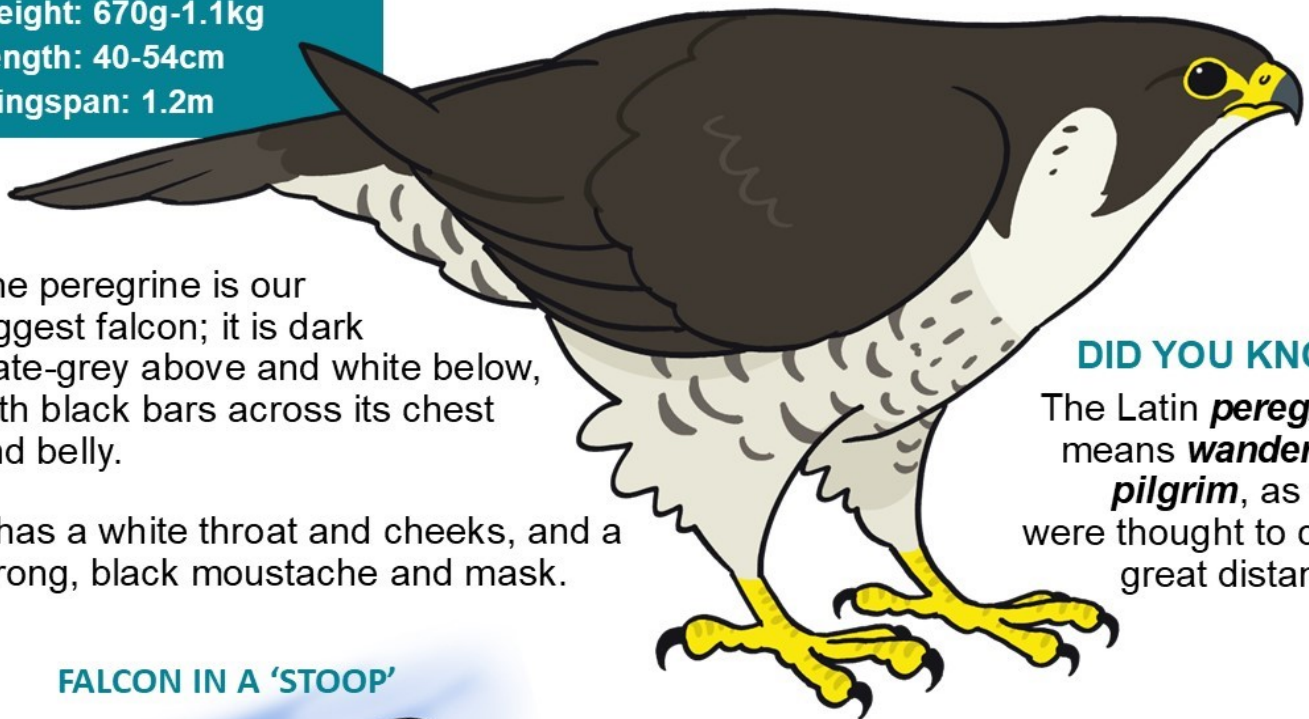
Average lifespan: 6 years
Weight: 670g-1.1kg
Length: 40-54cm
Wingspan: 1.2m

The peregrine is our biggest falcon; it is dark slate-grey above and white below, with black bars across its chest and belly.

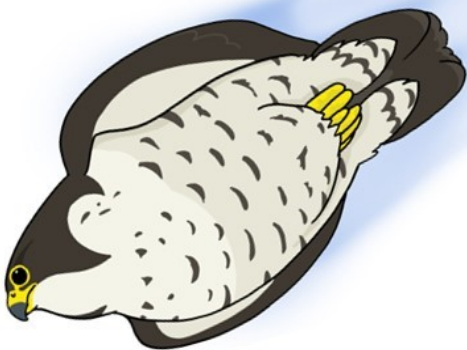
It has a white throat and cheeks, and a strong, black moustache and mask.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Latin *peregrinus* means **wanderer** or **pilgrim**, as they were thought to cover great distances.



FALCON IN A 'STOOP'



Peregrines are among the fastest animals on the planet, reaching speeds of up to **200 miles per hour** when '**stooping**' - diving down on its prey from a great height.

Prey is usually taken mid-air and consists mostly of birds like feral pigeons and collared doves.

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RAISING YOUNG

The male is smaller than the female



Peregrine falcons are dedicated parents and mate for life. Females are referred to as **falcons**, with the male known as a **tiercel**.

Nests are very basic, and are simply a scrape in either soil or gravel on a high ledge or cliff side.

The female lays 2 to 4 speckled eggs, which are incubated for approximately a month...



A small hole is the first sign the chick is beginning to hatch...



The chick eventually emerges. It is damp and the eyes are closed.



When dry, fluffy feathers provide a warm coat, but these will be replaced.

Both parent birds work together to bring in food to the young, who always seem to be eager to feed. The adult falcons tear pieces from the carcasses of their prey and they carefully share it with their demanding offspring.



Plumage changes from white, downy fluff to the true feathers as they grow in size and strength.

After around five weeks, the fledgling birds have enough adult plumage to leave the nest. They remain dependent on their parents whilst they develop the skills they need before dispersing.



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CONSERVATION

The peregrine is our probably our most charismatic bird of prey. It suffered a rapid demise in the 1950s and 60s due to the use of persistent pesticides, and by the 1970s, peregrines were so scarce that for several years not a single bird was seen in the county. After the pesticides were banned peregrine numbers started to slowly recover.

Since then peregrines have been making a welcome return to their former haunts. In 1984, after an absence of 30 years a pair bred again in the Peak District. By 2004, there were at least 15 nests, the birds using ledges on natural cliffs and quarry faces. Further south a pair adopted Willington Power Station's cooling towers, nesting there between 1993 and 2000, and rearing a total of ten young until the station was decommissioned.

Today peregrines can be seen across the county, both in our wild spaces and urban centres, Chesterfield as well as Derby, but sadly like the goshawk and hen harrier, they continue to be persecuted and still need our help.

Rings are placed on the legs of chicks whilst in the nest in order to monitor the movements of the birds and any changes to their population. These have unique colour patterns and numbers to identify individual birds.



The theft of peregrine eggs for sale (usually as chicks once they have hatched) continues since they fetch such high prices in the Middle East.

The RSPB, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and the police have been working on this issue for several years with covert cameras up at several nest sites in remote parts of the county.

Peregrines are protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981

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FALCON QUIZ

Use the four information sheets to help you answer these questions...

FALCON FACTS

What does the Latin word *peregrinus* mean?

On average, what is the **average lifespan** of a peregrine falcon?

What is **stooping**?

CITY LIVING

Where is a recommended place to **view** the nesting falcons in Derby?

How does a peregrine **alarm call** sound?

RAISING YOUNG

Who is a **tiercel**?

How long do peregrines *incubate* their eggs before hatching?

CONSERVATION

Why are chicks given **leg rings**?

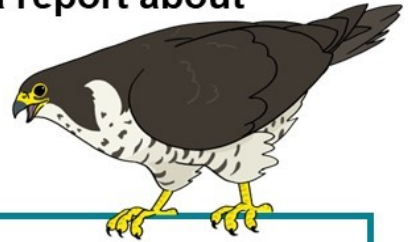
In which **decade** did populations of peregrines begin to rapidly decline?

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RAPTOR REPORT

If you have been watching the peregrines using the webcams or have actually visited one of the local nest sites, why not write a report about what you saw?

You may wish to share this with your school community, via your website or even your school newsletter



LOCATION: *Where were you? What did it look like?*

ISSUES: *Did your experience go as planned? Were there any issues (e.g. weather)*

RECOMMENDATIONS: *Do you have any advice? (e.g. what should you take?)*

SEQUENCE: *What happened when? Think about the order of your report.*

EMOTIONS: *How did you feel seeing these brilliant birds?*

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WILD WRITING

Use the **word bank** to create fabulous facts in full sentences.

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bird of prey

beak

carnivorous

predator raptor



feather

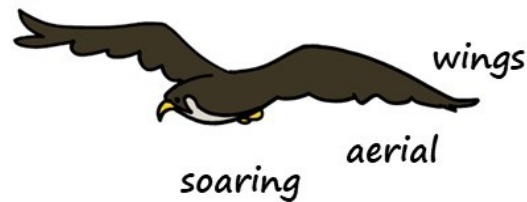
talons

hooked



pigeon

prey



wings

soaring aerial

plummet

stoop

diving



egg



scrape

nest

speckled

incubate

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PEREGRINE POETRY

You may wish to use some of the words suggested below when creating your piece of peregrine poetry. It doesn't have to rhyme, but you should seek to capture the nature of this agile, aerial acrobat.

predator raptor falcon talons

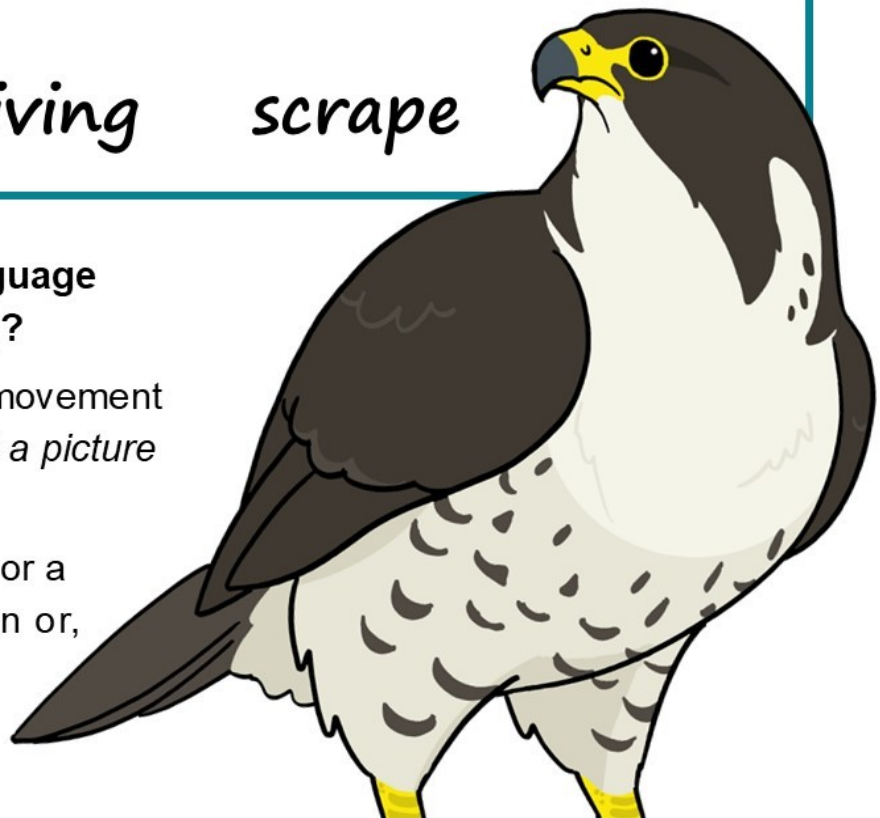
tiercel velocity speed beak

soaring claws hooked sharp

prey aerial ledge fledgling

plummeting diving stooping

chicks diving scrape



Could you use descriptive language to further improve your writing?

Consider the shape, colour and movement of the bird to inspire you to “*paint a picture with words*”.

You may wish to include a **simile** or a **metaphor** to compare the falcon or, their actions, to something else.

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WINDOW WINGS



Above, a finished
example

The stunning stained-glass windows within *Derby Cathedral* have inspired this easy to make craft activity.

- 1, **Draw around** this template on **black card**.
- 2, **Cut out random shapes** within the falcon, allowing **thick gaps** between them.
- 3, Stick pieces of **colourful tissue paper** to one side, being careful not to overlap.
- 4, Place your peregrine in a window where the sun shines to create the full **stained glass effect**!



Save paper!

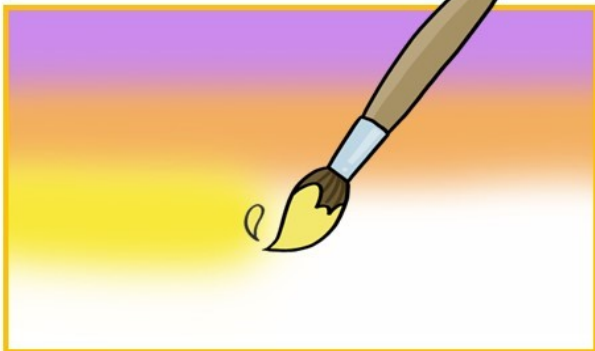
This template
could be used
multiple times!

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SUNSET SCENES

Sunsets and silhouettes produce a fabulous effect in four, easy to follow steps. You can adjust the colours and try to create your own landscape for your falcon/s to fly across...

1



Paint stripes of watery paint onto thick, white paper.

(Fixing the page to a board with masking tape around the edges stops paper from crinkling up.)

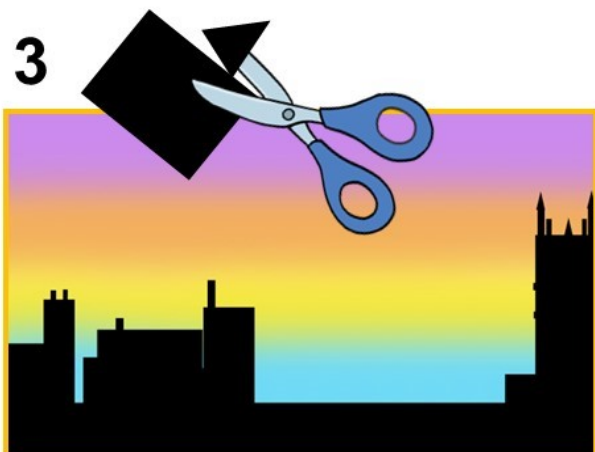
2



A thick, wet brush works best. The colours will bleed in to each other.

(Allow your artwork to dry before taking the tape from the edges)

3



Cut black paper to create a skyline of buildings. Vary the heights and add chimneys

4



Black markers or felt pens help add extra details, including falcons and other birds.

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FALCON QUIZ

BEAK	FEATHERS	PIGEON	STOOPING
CHICK	HOOKED	PREDATOR	TALONS
CONSERVATION	NESTING	RAPTOR	TIERCEL
FALCON	PEREGRINE	SCRAPE	VISION

K	N	Y	N	X	L	B	C	J	I	T	Y	F	B	B
S	L	J	O	O	C	E	E	Z	R	Y	N	A	Y	O
P	Y	N	Z	P	I	G	C	A	K	H	Q	Z	I	A
I	E	H	E	H	X	T	N	R	K	S	D	C	O	X
C	C	R	A	S	K	K	A	I	E	M	T	H	A	Y
F	S	E	E	K	T	O	X	V	P	I	G	E	O	N
D	R	P	P	G	D	I	Z	Y	R	O	T	J	A	R
E	E	A	H	G	R	K	N	F	B	E	O	J	O	F
K	H	R	V	B	C	I	C	G	X	I	S	T	I	S
O	T	C	E	I	I	Y	N	I	D	J	A	N	S	X
O	A	S	P	A	S	Q	C	E	H	D	Z	Q	O	S
H	E	A	C	H	X	I	U	S	E	C	O	M	M	C
R	F	F	A	I	S	I	O	R	T	T	V	R	W	V
R	O	T	P	A	R	G	P	N	L	L	L	G	L	W
T	N	O	C	L	A	F	V	S	N	O	L	A	T	H

The words may overlap or appear in any direction, including diagonally.



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Can you use the clues and letter sounds to create the missing words?

The _ _ _ _ _ has
long, strong _ _ _ _ _.



a f l c n o

i g s w n



It sits on _ _ _ _ _ in
the _ _ _ _ _.

g g s e

e t n s

They must be _ _ _ _ _ to
_ _ _ _ _.



a t s f

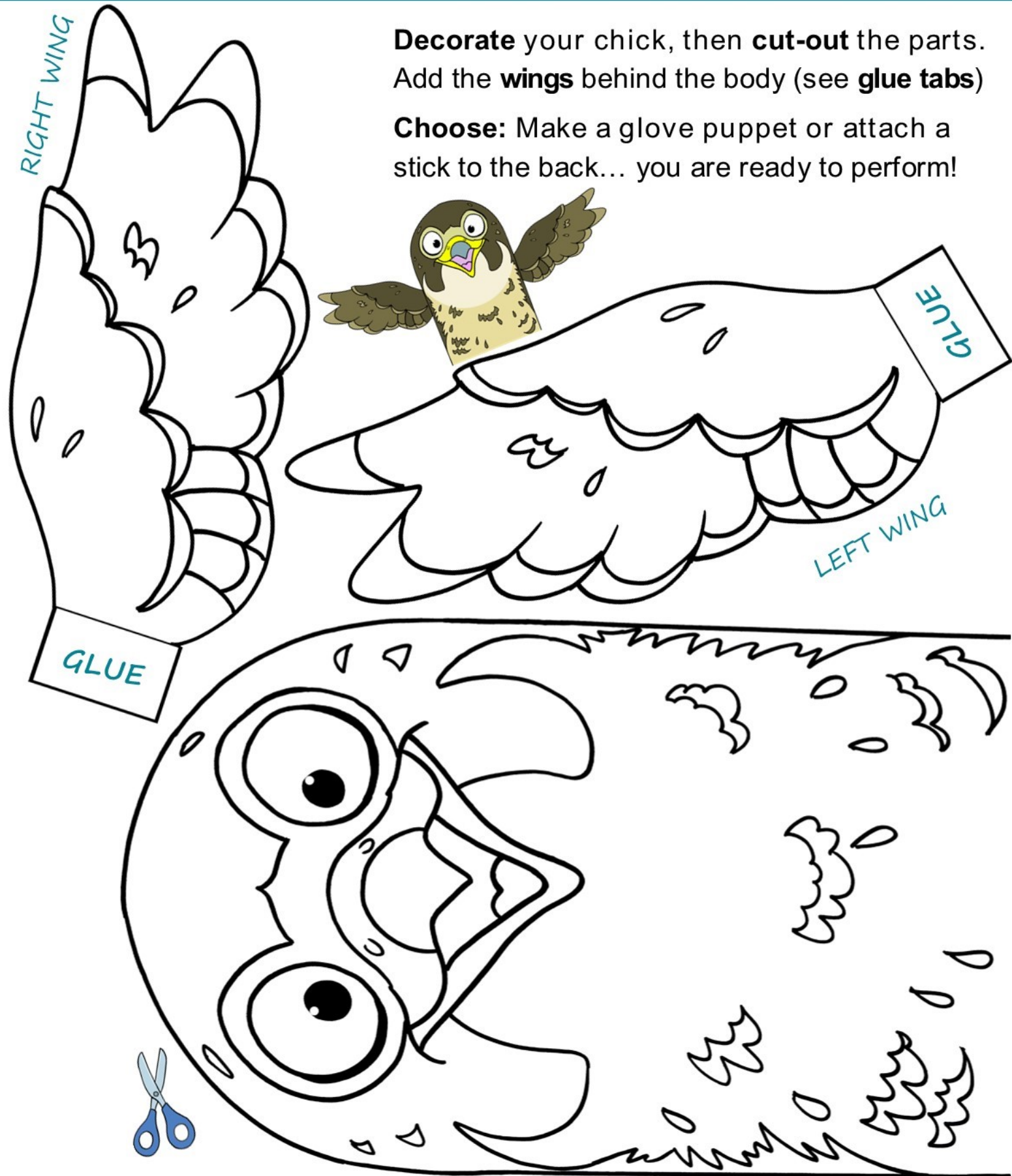
u n t h

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PEREGRINE PUPPET

Decorate your chick, then **cut-out** the parts. Add the **wings** behind the body (see **glue tabs**)

Choose: Make a glove puppet or attach a stick to the back... you are ready to perform!

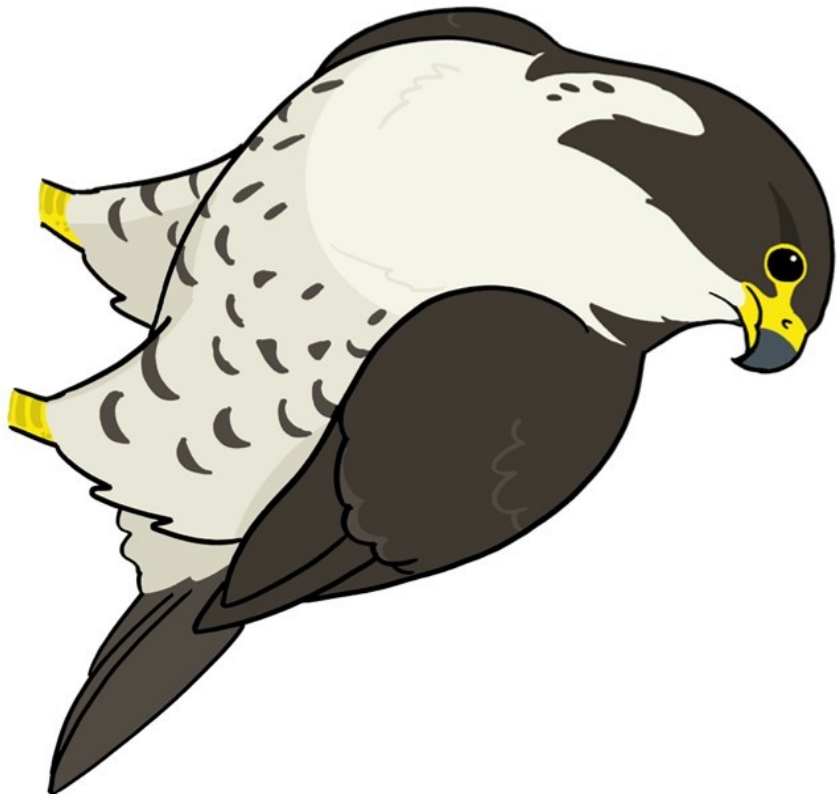


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incubation

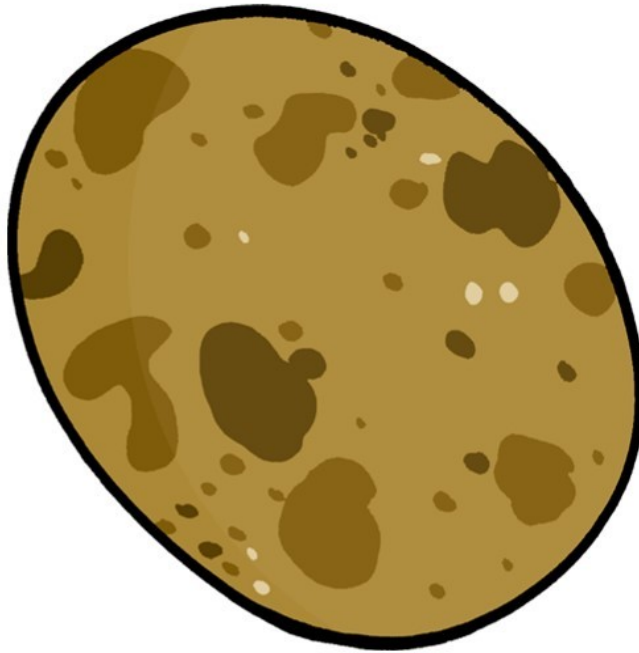


adult falcon



peregrine falcon

egg

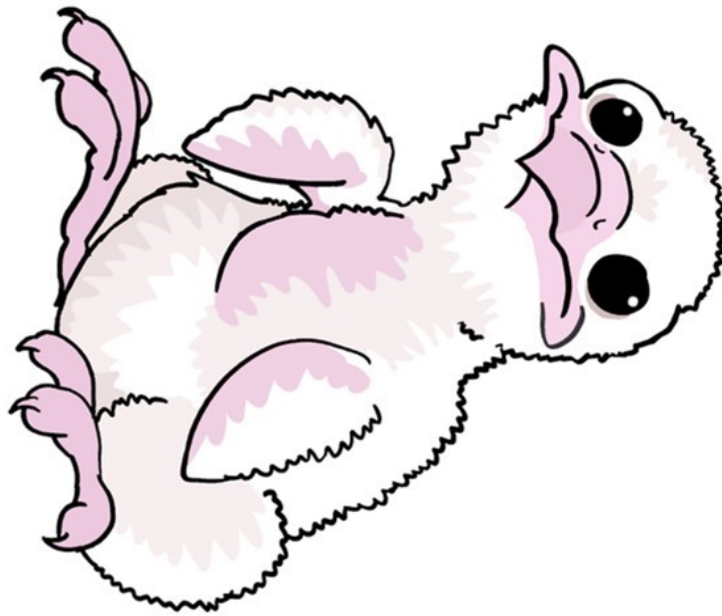


hatching



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Newly-hatched
chick



Fledgling



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MINDFUL COLOURING



Thank you for showing interest wanting to fundraise for us!



It's because of people like you that we can continue to fight for nature and protect Derbyshire's wildlife.

Need ideas and support?

There are many ways in which you can generate donations, here are a few ideas...

- A non-uniform day, with a donation to wear your own clothes.
- Treasure Hunt with peregrine clues.
- A Peregrine Party. Have a disco with donations on admission.
- Sponsored silences, car washes, odd-jobs for your family—ask your children what they would like to do? Anything goes!
- Bake Sales selling tasty treats (you could even use a falcon theme!)



You can receive our **FREE Community Fundraising Pack** filled with hints, tips and inspirational stories!

<https://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/fundraising-pack>