

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

An Active Peregrine Eyrie Along the Hudson: On the morning of 3 June 1988, I observed three downy Peregrine Falcon chicks perched on the edge of a wooden nest box just below the west tower of the Tappan Zee Bridge at Tarrytown, Westchester County. This, and an active eyrie on the Cornell Medical Center building in Manhattan, would mark the first time since the 1951 nesting season that Peregrine falcons have successfully hatched a clutch of eggs in their historical territories from Manhattan north to Storm King mountain (Herbert and Herbert, 1969). Late in the winter of 1984-1985 it came to my attention that a Peregrine had been seen on the Tappan Zee Bridge on several occasions that winter. A literature review revealed that one also had been spotted there during the winter of 1983-1984. I began receiving regular reports of a single Peregrine on that bridge from the winter of 1984-1985 through the summer of 1987. These sightings were phoned in by commuters and bridge maintenance workers who caught glimpses of the bird. I saw the bird several times during that period and identified it as an adult female with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service bands. During March 1985, two Peregrine nest boxes were placed on the Tappan Zee Bridge by the Museum of the Hudson Highlands, Cornwall on Hudson, with the approval of the New York State Thruway Authority, under field work funded by the World Wildlife Fund-U.S and in cooperation with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and the Peregrine Fund, Inc. A year before, we also had placed nest boxes on several other Hudson River crossings. In July 1987, reports began coming in of a second, smaller Peregrine on the bridge - the male of the species. I saw this individual once briefly during a visit to the bridge that month. On that same visit I climbed to check the condition of the two nest boxes. The east box was defended vigorously by the female while the male was nowhere to be seen. The area was littered with the remains of Rock Doves, Blue Jays and Yellow-shafted Flickers.

Reports continued to come in through that next winter of two Peregrines on the bridge. They were most often seen Perched on the beacons atop the towers, just above the nest boxes. Then on 17 March 1988, Kathy O'Brien, with the NYSDEC Endangered Species Unit, and I visited the bridge and observed both birds loafing in the early afternoon, one perched near the west nest box and the other in the center of the span. The next day Kathy O'Brien returned in the early morning and observed the pair copulating three times. During early April she reported the birds were exchanging incubation duties in the west box. On 25 May Kathy O'Brien phoned in to report two chicks in the west box. She estimated their age at two weeks. On my visit of 3 June, a third chick was seen. A reliable spotter, Chuck Harten, reported that a chick had fledged and was perched with the female out on the bridge on 13 June. At least two young were seen flying well in July. Hopefully as of this writing all three young are out and doing well.

Dennis Mildner, RD 7 Box 79, Hopewell Junction, N.Y. 12533

Literature Cited

Herbert, R.A. and K.S. Herbert. 1969. The extirpation of the Hudson River Peregrine Falcon population, pp. 133-154 in *Peregrine Falcon Populations*, J.J. Hickey (ed.), Univ. Wisconsin Press, Madison.

Prairie Warbler as a regular breeder at Alvar sites in Jefferson County: Bonney (1988) in *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* stated the Prairie Warbler is a southern species reaching the northern limit of its range in New York. He noted the epicenter of its range in the state included the Hudson Valley, eastern Long Island and the central southern tier. North of the New York State Thruway the species is much less frequent, particularly in central and western sections of the state where atlas workers found it to be a rare breeder.

In Jefferson county prior to 1986 the species was considered a rare migrant with little evidence of breeding. The probable breeding record noted by the atlas involved two pair of Prairie Warblers observed by me during 1984 and 1985 at The Nature Conservancy's Limerick Cedar's Preserve in the Town of Brownville. This preserve is largely composed of Calcareous Pavement Barrens mixed with Limestone woodland communities. These communities are characterized by open forests of small trees containing substantial amounts of Red Cedar interspersed with areas of exposed limestone bedrock and open grassy areas. Although these Alvar type communities are rare globally, northwestern Jefferson county contains several of the best remaining examples in North America.

During the 1987 and 1988 breeding seasons, in the course of my duties as The Nature Conservancy's Central New York Land Steward, I visited several of these Alvar sites. At the newly acquired TNC 772 acre Chaumont Barrens Preserve a minimum of 10 pair of Prairie Warblers were present in 1988. Also during 1988 a minimum of 5 pair were present at Limerick Cedars. During brief visits to 3 other Alvar sites in this region singing males were found at all sites. In addition one singing male was present at the El Dorado Beach preserve located in southwestern Jefferson County. These observations indicate the species is a locally fairly common breeder on limestone barrens sites in the area. It is likely detailed surveys of suitable habitat in the towns of Cape Vincent, Lyme, Chaumont and Brownville would locate several dozen pair. In addition Prairie Warblers may occur in lesser numbers in small areas of the towns of Hounsfield and Henderson and perhaps elsewhere in Jefferson County.

This Prairie Warbler population is approximately 100 miles north of any other substantial breeding population in the state. Quilliam (1973), however, found the species to be a rare but increasing breeder in the nearby Kingston, Ontario region. This area is 20-40 miles from the Jefferson County sites. Bonney (1988) noted this species was found by Ontario atlas workers in southern Ontario and is also continuing to expand in New York. Although