



Apply now

Search for

- HOME
- NEWS
- SPORT
- GAMING
- DATING
- SHOWBIZ & ENTERTAINMENT
- OPINION
- MOTORING
- SITEMAP

News

Sunday Mail COLUMNISTS

13 August 2006



Rosie Kane

I DON'T know about you but I'm sick of the T**** S***** saga - and I'm in the middle of it.

Current Affairs

"I want to highlight that following a recent story about lack of supply of body armour to L&B police that we"...Tomy, Edinburgh

[Click here to have your say](#)



Advertisement

EXCLUSIVE: EASY PREY

EXCLUSIVE Peregrines face extinction as gangs steal 100 eggs to sell to Middle East dealers

By Norman Silvester

PEREGRINE falcons are on the verge of extinction in Scotland after 40 nests were robbed by gangs who sell their eggs to the Middle East, the Sunday Mail can reveal.

Numbers of breeding pairs have slumped by half to just 300 after around 100 eggs were taken in 18 months.

The gangs sell their eggs on for export to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain where mature peregrines can fetch £300,000.

Scottish peregrine falcons are the fastest creatures on the planet, swooping to attack pigeons and songbirds at speeds approaching 200mph.

In the Middle East they are prized as prestigious pets because of their unique hunting abilities.

Last week two senior Jordanian police officers and conservation experts visited their counterparts in Inverness in an effort to step up the battle against international wildlife crime.

Mahdi Qyatrameez, head of wildlife enforcement for Jordan's Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, said: "Illegal falconry is one of our biggest problems.

"This is an organised crime that nets the criminals involved millions of dollars."

RECOMMENDED LINKS

Apply for a Home

Improvement Loan Today

Home improvement loans for any purpose. From 5,000 to 100,000, Central Capital searches the market for the right loan for you. All credit histories and situations considered. Apply now.

Compare Over 100 Low-Cost

Home Loans

Quick Compare can help you turn your dream home into a reality. Borrow up to £20,000 for a period of six months to five years. Apply online now.

Barclaycard

0% interest on purchases for 3 months

0% interest on balance transfers for 12 months (Balance transfer fee applies)

17.9% APR Typical (variable)

Barclaycard

Apply now

Peregrine numbers first suffered a catastrophic drop in Scotland during the 1950s and 1960s, prompting new laws to protect the birds.

A national survey of peregrines in Scotland carried out 15 years ago recorded 625 breeding pairs.

But numbers have plummeted since then, with the species almost extinct in the Highlands and Argyll, Central Scotland, Perth and Kinross.

Most of the surviving falcons are now found in the south of Scotland with bird lovers keeping a round-the-clock watch on nests.

Keith Morton, peregrine expert with RSPB Scotland, said: "These birds are already extinct in large parts of the north of Scotland and the numbers in the wild elsewhere are declining almost daily.

"The theft from nests in Scotland is just the start of a long chain of supply in which tens of thousands of pounds are paid for peregrines.

"Very often it is done by German nationals coming to Scotland or rings of wildlife criminals in northern England who specialise in taking stuff like this."

Police wildlife officers monitor automatic number plate reading cameras on the M6 and M74 to spot known egg collectors heading north from England.

Police hold intelligence on some 300 known or suspected egg collectors, whose cars are logged if they go near the nesting sites of rare birds.

RSPB figures show five million wild birds are traded internationally every year, with a significant proportion of the £11.8 billion trade being illegal.

As well as the eggs, experts say around 100 live birds are transported illegally from Scotland to Arab countries every year.

Six years ago Dutchman Wilhelmus Ezlin was arrested by police near Aviemore as he tried to buy 16 live peregrine chicks for £4000.

He was fined £2000 and had his car and the cash confiscated.

In 1998 German wildlife, officials handed back two rare peregrine falcons after

Low Rate Home Improvement Loans

Borrow from £10,000 to £100,000. Low rate secured loans from just 6.9% to 9.9%, typical 7.9% APR variable. Visit Picture Loans today to apply quickly and easily online.

DNA tests found they had been . stolen from Scotland as eggs.

The birds are about ' the size of a crow, with long, broad, pointed wings, powerful talons hooked yellow, beaks.

mailfile 10 most at risk

Peregrines are not the only birds facing declining numbers through poaching or threats to habitat. These are Scotland's most at-risk birds.

Capercaillie Deer fencing prevents the birds from travelling to mate. Has also been an increase in predators.

Hen harrier Illegally hunted to protect grouse numbers as they prey on the lucrative game birds.

Corncrake Changes in farming methods have reduced their tall grassland habitat.

Great skuas Eat fish thrown from trawlers but a decline in fishing means fewer fish are thrown back.

Golden eagle Grouse hunters poison them and steal their eggs to protect the game.

Red-necked phalarope Loss of suitable pools for breeding and feeding has caused a decline in numbers.

Golden plover Global warming makes them nest before food source (crane flies) appears.

Whooper swan Pollution of wetlands poisons the swans when they arrive here during migration

Greenshank The loss of peat habitats means the wading birds have lost much of their natural habitat.

Black-throated divers Under attack by poachers, while nesting sites are prone to flooding.

SUNDAY EMAIL | n.silvester@sundaymail.co.uk