

The Peregrines of Rochester



Objective: Students will perform, speak, a play to reinforce and disseminate information.

Setting: The story opens on the sidewalk near the Kodak headquarters in Rochester, New York. It is late March and there are many businessmen and women on their way to work. Also sharing the sidewalk is a group of people with binoculars, lawn chairs and thermoses of coffee.

Characters: Joe Businessman	Jane Businesswoman	
Falcon lover #1	Falcon lover #8	Falcon lover #15
Falcon lover #2	Falcon lover #9	Falcon lover #16
Falcon lover #3	Falcon lover #10	Falcon lover #17
Falcon lover #4	Falcon lover #11	Falcon lover #18
Falcon lover #5	Falcon lover #12	Falcon lover #19
Falcon lover #6	Falcon lover #13	
Falcon lover #7	Falcon lover #14	

Props and Costumes:

- Joe and Jane need to be dressed as business people and carrying a briefcase.
- Falcon lovers are dressed in winter jackets, hats and gloves. They have binoculars and are looking at the sky. On the sidewalk are lawn chairs, thermoses and snacks to share.

(Joe Businessman and Jane Businesswoman are hurrying along on their way to work.)

Joe: Hi Jane. Do you believe this weather we are having? I can't remember it being so cold or March.

Jane: Yes. I'm so tired of the cold and snow this year.

(As Joe and Jane walk down State Street they see a group of people with binoculars watching the sky and talking excitedly.)

Joe: Have you noticed all these people here in the morning, Jane? I wonder what they are doing here?

Jane: Why don't we ask them.

Joe: *(Going over to one of the people in the crowd)* Good morning. I don't mean to interrupt, but what are you folks doing here this early in the morning?

Falcon lover #1: We just learned Mariah and Kaver have returned and we are here watching them.

Jane: Who are Mariah and Kaver?

Falcon lover #2: They are the peregrine falcons that have a nest at the top of the Kodak tower.

Jane and Joe: *(looking confused)* What is a peregrine falcon?

(Looking shocked all the falcon lovers say at once)

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT A PEREGRINE FALCON IS?????!!!!!!

(Jane and Joe jump back from the crowd.)

Jane and Joe: *(meekly say)* No

(Falcon lover #2 leads Joe and Jane over toward the lawn chairs that have been set up on the sidewalk.)

Falcon lover #2: I think we need to educate you two. Sit down in one of these chairs and we will give you a lesson about the falcons.

(Falcon lovers #1 to #10 circle around Joe and Jane. The other falcon lovers are in the background and continue to watch the sky.)

Falcon lover #3: *(holding up a poster)* The peregrines are migratory birds of prey, also known as raptors. Other raptors are eagles, owls, and hawks.

Falcon lover #4: The peregrines belong to the falcon family. Their streamlined bodies and small heads make them very fast fliers. One bird was clocked at 217 miles per hour.

Falcon lover #5: *(holding up a picture of Mariah and Kaver)* The male and female have about the same markings but the female is 1/3 bigger and stronger than the male. The adult peregrines are 22 inches to 24 inches long and will weigh about two pounds.

Falcon lover #6: Look at this picture of Mariah. They have long pointed wings, black sideburns and a black head that looks like a helmet. Their sharp eyes are ringed in yellow.

Jane: That is all very interesting, but what is the big deal about them?

Falcon lover #7: Boy, you two really don't know much about them. These birds were put on the endangered species list.

Falcon lover #8: Look at this graph. *(holding up a graph)* In the 1940's there were over 1500 falcons in North America. By the 1970's there were only 30 breeding pairs left.

Joe: Wow, that is something! What caused that to happen?

Falcon lover #9: Well, one reason was a pesticide called DDT that was in the food chain. It caused the eggs of the peregrine to be very thin and they would break. Therefore, for many years no new babies were hatching.

Falcon lover #10: The government banned the use of DDT and other pesticides. Wildlife scientists then came up with a plan to increase the falcon population.

(Falcon lovers 1 to 10 step back and the other falcon lovers join Joe and Jane)

Jane: So, what was the plan?

Falcon lover #11: Since the peregrines couldn't always return to their natural environment, scientists introduced them to new habitats like tall buildings, bridges and grain elevators. Nesting boxes were put up in many cities.

Falcon lover #12: Kodak got permission to put a nest box on the top of the Kodak tower in 1995 hoping to attract a pair of falcons. Normally the peregrines would make a nest called a scrape on high ledges or cliffs. In 1998 the first falcons, Mariah and Cabot-Sirocco used the nest box at Kodak.

Joe: Has the program here at Kodak been successful?

Falcon lover #13: Yes, it has. Take a look at this family tree. (*hold up poster board with family tree on it*) Mariah has hatched 43 eggs and 38 young birds have fledged since 1998. Falcons usually mate for life. You will see here that Mariah has had two mates. Cabot-Sirocco, her first mate, died.

Jane: Has she laid her eggs yet?

Falcon lover #14: No, not yet. She will lay two to five eggs around the end of March or beginning of April. One year she laid some of her eggs during an ice storm. Once she starts to lay her eggs she will lay an egg every other day. Once the last egg is laid, then she will sit on them until they hatch. Sometimes Kaver will help, but it is mostly the female's job.

Falcon lover #15: It will take about 33 days before they will hatch. Last year the first one hatched on Mother's Day weekend. I remember looking at the camera and seeing this little ball of white fuzz under Mariah.

Falcon lover #16: Yes, I remember that. (*looking at Jane and Joe*) The baby falcon is called an eyas. It spends two or three days pipping at the shell to get out. It will weigh about 1.5 ounces. It is covered with down and will get feathers in three to five weeks. They will be full size in about six weeks.

Falcon lover #17: After they hatch and are growing, Mariah and Kaver have to work hard to keep them fed. The peregrine will catch its prey while in flight. It usually kills a bird by slamming into it with fisted talons. It then uses its beak to get pieces of meat for the babies. It will hunt pigeons, ducks, crows and sparrows to name a few.

Falcon lover #18: The chicks will grow quickly and between their 38th and 45th day of life they will leave the nest on their first flight. It is something to see. They will pump their wings for hours getting ready to try that first flight. The females are usually the last to leave because they are larger and heavier. When they are getting ready to fledge, there will be a lot of us falcon lovers down here watching.

Falcon lover #19: Before they fledge, they are banded. When they are three weeks old, members of the Department of Environment Conservation remove the chicks from the nest. They weigh and measure each one and bands are put onto their legs.

Falcon lover #2: They put a red and black band on their left leg. This tells that they are from the Eastern flyway region. On their right leg goes a silver band that is a US Fish and Wildlife identifier. The bands are light weight and don't cause them any trouble.

Falcon lover #3: The birds get named at this time too. People interested and involved with the program get to help name them.

Joe Businessman: Wow, I have learned so much. So tell me what is the future like for these birds?

Falcon lover #4: Their future looks better than 20 years ago. A nest box like the one here at Kodak and in at least 25 other cities has helped to increase the peregrine's population. You might not know this but most falcons do not die of old age, rather parasites, poisons and accidents kill about 75% of them each year. That is why this program is so important and needs to continue. We are so lucky that Kodak and the Audubon Society work so hard each year to continue it.

Jane Businesswoman: Thank you for sharing all you know about these wonderful birds. If I want to continue to follow them how can I do that?

Falcon lover #5: That is simple. Go to rfalconcam.com. There are thousands of people from all over the United States and the world that watch and comment about Mariah and Kaver.

Falcon lover #8: There is also a person named Shaky that has an unofficial site. He posts pictures, movies and sometimes funny pictures of the falcons.

Falcon lover #6: Also feel free to join us any day to watch. The best times are early morning and late afternoon. There are usually some of us here.

Jane and Joe: (*walking off*) Thank you again for taking the time to educate us.

Falcon lover #1: You are welcome and tell your family and friends so they can help support programs to save the falcons and other endangered species.

Try writing your own play.

Materials:

Students will need to make/obtain the following props:

Poster: Raptors, hawks, owls, and eagles. This could be a collage of pictures from magazines.

Mariah and Kaver Pictures: Print it off the www.rfalconcam.com web site or draw your own.

Falcon Population Graph: This is a simple graph with number of peregrine falcons on the vertical axis and years on the horizontal axis.

Falcon Family Tree: Print it off the www.rfalconcam.com web site.

Binoculars: May be made from toilet paper tubes, masking tape, and string.

