

The CITES Identification Guide to Falconry Species



Environment Canada Environnement Canada

Canada





The CITES Identification Guide to Falconry Species

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Species represented in this guide

Many species of falcons, hawks, and eagles are used in the sport of falconry. The following falcon and hawk species have been included in this guide because they are popular with falconers and, as a result, are common targets for poachers and smugglers.

- Lanner falcon *Falco biarmicus* (App. II)
- Saker falcon *Falco cherrug* (App. II)
- Laggar falcon *Falco jugger* (App. I)
- Barbary falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* (App. I)
- Peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus* (App. I)
- Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus* (App. I)
- Northern goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* (App. II)

The Prairie falcon *Falco mexicanus* (App. II) has also been included in this guide as it closely resembles many of the above-listed species of concern. This species is common in falconry, but is not prominent in illegal international trade.

How to use this guide

The identification process begins with pages iv-v which will help you determine whether your specimen is a member of the genus *Falco* (falcons) or the genus *Accipiter* (hawks). The *Accipiter* page will direct you straight to photos of the Northern Goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis*. The *Falco* page, however, will direct you to a range of colour photographs of various falcons. Do not try to match your specimen with one of these photos, but rather try to find similarities of colour pattern. Juvenile and hybrid birds, which often are found in trade, can be more challenging to identify, so ensure that you carefully compare your specimen to all of the photographs. Once you have selected a photo that resembles your specimen, follow the directions below that photo to find the correct species page. In order to successfully identify your specimen, it is important that you take your time comparing your specimen to the photographs. Key identification features are indicated with red arrows. It is important to recognise that there can be considerable variation in colour and pattern within a species, so although you should compare your specimen carefully to the photographs, be aware that the colours may not be an exact match. It is also important to consider the size of the specimen when making your identification.



Identification of wild caught and captive bred specimens

In many jurisdictions, seamless bands are placed on the feet of falcon chicks to identify captive-bred birds. The feet of falcon chicks grow rapidly, and within a few days the foot will be large enough that these bands cannot be removed. The use of these seamless bands is recognized as being an effective way of identifying captive-bred birds.

Some jurisdictions permit the capture of wild adult birds for falconry, and these birds may be laundered as captive bred. With proper training and a hood, wild caught birds can become very comfortable with their handler within a week. A bird's temperament cannot be used as an indicator of origin.



Seamless bands (ruler cm)



Terminology

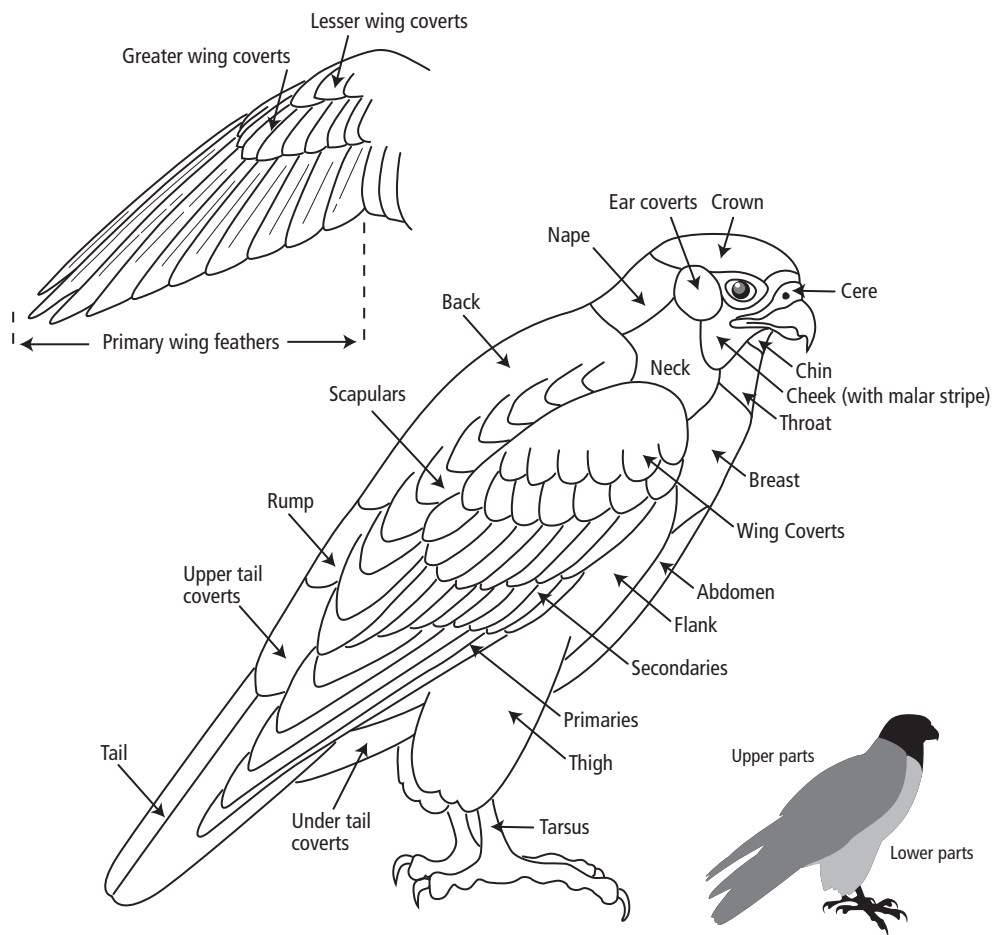
BW = Body Weight.

TL = Total Length. Measured from the top of the head to the tip of the tail.

X = When found between two scientific names, "x" indicates a hybrid.
e.g., *Falco rusticolus* x *Falco peregrinus* is a hybrid of these two species.

Upper parts: Back, scapulars, rump, tail, upper tail coverts and wing coverts, primaries and secondaries.

Lower parts: Breast, abdomen, flank, thigh and under tail coverts.

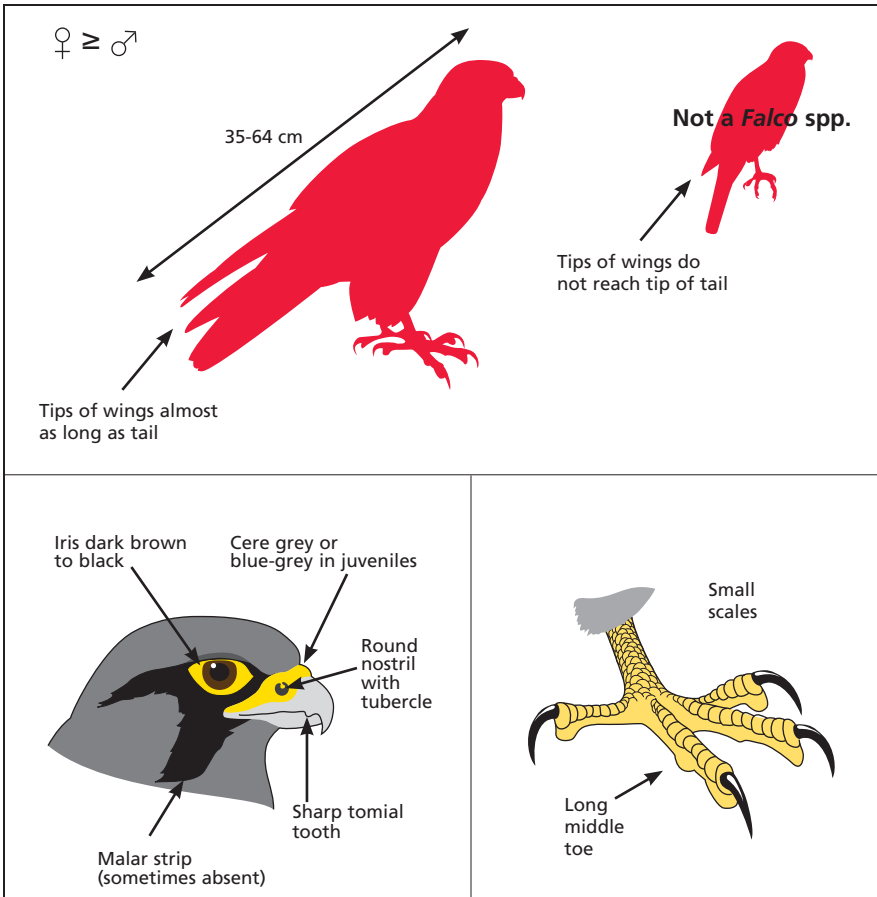




***Falco* spp.**

The most important feature for distinguishing a *Falco* spp. from other birds of prey used in falconry is the eye colour. **All *Falco* spp. commonly used in falconry have irises that are dark brown to almost black.**

- Size: TL 35-64 cm, BW 500-2100 g.
- Females have the same colouring as males or are slightly darker. Females can be up to one third larger than males.
- Long, pointed wings. When the wing is extended, the second primary feather is the longest. When folded, the tips of the wings are almost as long as the tail.
- Nostrils are round; a tubercle is present inside the nostril.



To *Falco* spp. Quick Key page ➡

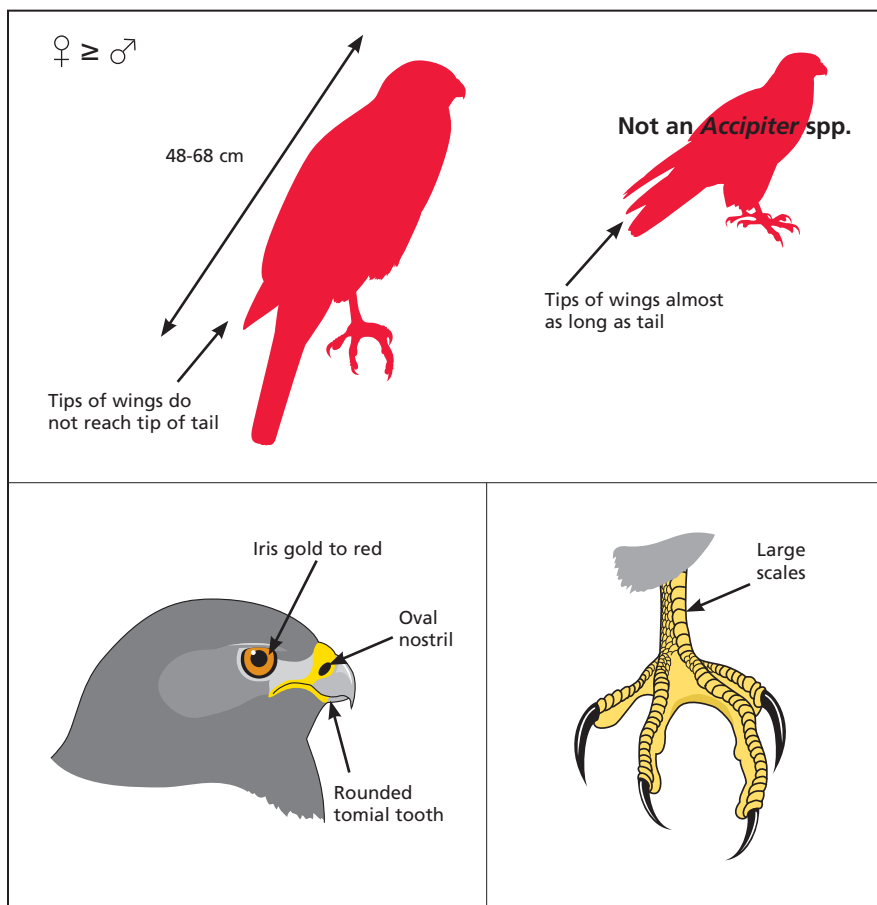
1



Accipiter spp.

Accipiter spp. are also commonly used in falconry.

- Size: TL 48-68 cm, BW 517-1170 g.
- Shorter wings than *Falco* spp.
- Nostrils are oval shaped, and lack a tubercle.
- Tips of wings do not reach tip of tail.
- Iris colour is gold to red.



To *Accipiter gentilis* page ➡



Symbols



Detain and refer to an expert



Male



Female



- reddish-brown head
- narrow malar stripe
- grey upper parts



2

3



- dark upper parts
- wide malar stripe



4

5



- large falcon (TL 48-60 cm)
- dark upper parts, head streaked with white



6

7



- large falcon (TL 48-60 cm)
- predominantly white



8



- large falcon (TL 48-60 cm)
- predominantly dark upper and lower parts



9



- brown upper parts
- brown to pale lower parts



10



Falco biarmicus – Lanner Falcon, Appendix II



Adult

Size: TL 35-50 cm

BW male 500-600 g

BW female 700-900 g

Subspecies: *F. b. feldeggii*, *F. b. erlangeri*,
F. b. tanypterus, *F. b. abyssinicus*,
F. b. biarmicus

Range: North Africa and the Middle East, in stony semi-desert and desert.

ID:

- reddish-brown head (may be mixed with white)
- barred tail
- back blue-grey, with horizontal stripes
- dark malar stripe

Similar species: *F. jugger*, *F. peregrinoides*

Countries of import: U.K., U.S.A.

Countries of export/re-export:

Germany, European Union countries, Guinea, Canada, U.K.

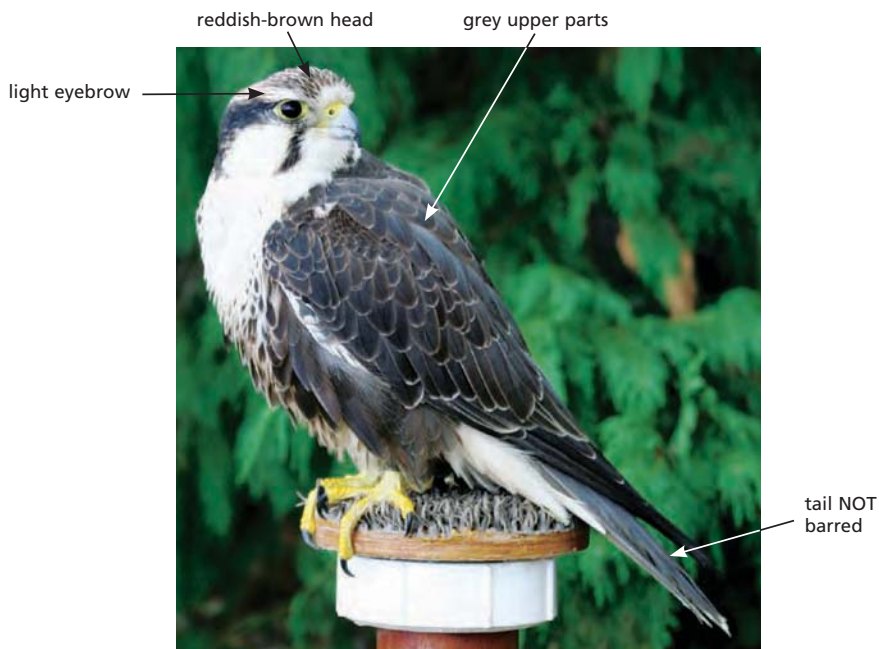
Purpose: Majority commercial, also captive breeding programs and personal.

Source: Majority captive bred, many wild caught as well.

For juveniles of this species, see page 12



Falco jugger – Lagger Falcon, Appendix I



Adult

Size: TL 35-46 cm
BW 525-850 g

Subspecies: N/A

Range: India and neighbouring countries.

ID:

- reddish-brown head
- tail **not** barred
- grey upper parts

Similar species: *F. biarmicus*,
F. peregrinoides

Trade: Legal global trade is comparatively small.

Countries of import: U.K., Canada, European countries.

Countries of export/re-export: Germany, U.K., Switzerland.

Purpose: Commercial, personal captive breeding, unknown.

Source: Majority captive bred.

For juveniles of this species, see page **12**



Falco peregrinus – Peregrine, Shaheen, Appendix I



Adult

Size: TL 34-50 cm
BW male 580-720 g (average 610 g)
BW female 860-1090 g (average 940 g)

Subspecies: *F. p. anatum*, *F. p. tundrius*,
F. p. pealei, *F. p. cassini*, *F. p. japonensis*,
F. p. fruitii, *F. p. calidus*, *F. p. peregrinus*,
F. p. brookei, *F. p. madens*, *F. p. minor*,
F. p. radama, *F. p. peregrinator*, *F. p. ernesti*,
F. p. nesiotes, *F. p. macropus*

Range: Global, except Antarctica.

ID:

- back blue-grey
- dark cap with wide malar stripe
- lower parts have dark horizontal stripes on pale background

Similar species: *F. pelegrioides*

Trade: Legal global trade increased in the 1980s, and is still high. Scandinavian countries mainly trading eggs for captive breeding programs, reintroduction and scientific purposes.

Countries of import: Denmark, Germany, Sweden, United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), U.K., U.S.A.

Countries of export/re-export: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Sweden.

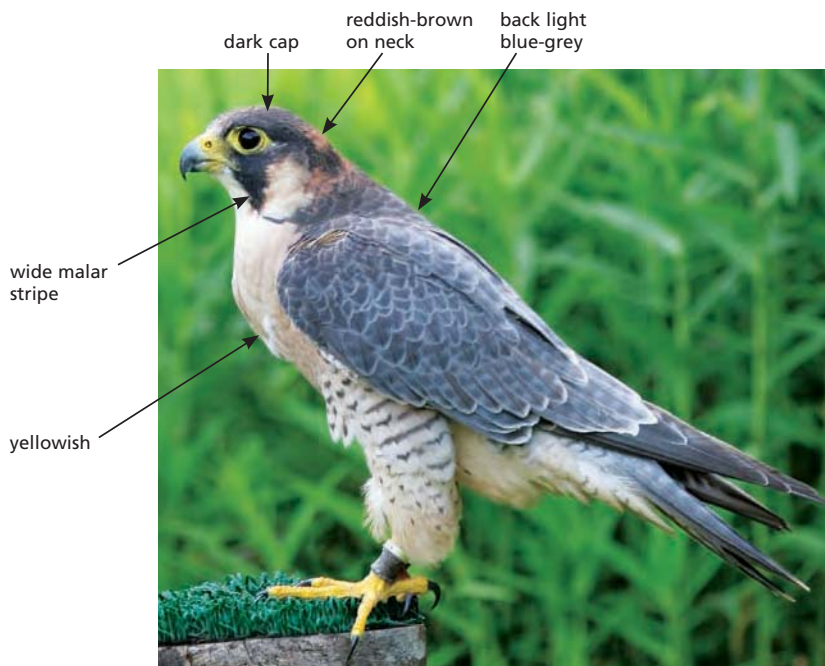
Purpose: Commercial, personal, captive breeding, scientific, and undeclared.

Source: Majority captive bred.

For juveniles of this species, see page 12



Falco peregrinoides – Barbary Falcon, Appendix I



Adult

Size: TL 33-44 cm
BW male 500-600 g
BW female 700-900 g

Subspecies: *F. p. babylonicus*,
F. p. peregrinoides

Range: North Africa and the Middle East,
in stony semi-desert and desert.

ID:

- back **light** blue-grey
- reddish-brown nape
- dark cap with wide malar stripe

Difference from *F. peregrinus*:

- body slimmer
- chest and abdomen lighter and yellowish
- malar stripe not as dark as *F. peregrinus*
- *F. peregrinus* with more contrast on chest and abdomen

Similar species: *F. peregrinus*, *F. biarmicus*,
F. jugger

Countries of import: Canada, Mexico,
U.K. and U.S.A.

Countries of export/re-export: Austria,
Bahrain, Germany, Saudi Arabia, U.A.E.
and U.S.A.

Purpose: Commercial, personal, captive
breeding programs and scientific.

Source: Majority captive bred.



Falco cherrug – Saker Falcon, Appendix II



white oval spots sometimes
forming bars on tail

Adult

Size: TL 45-55 cm
BW male 730-990 g
BW female 970-1300 g

Subspecies: *F. c. cherrug*, *F. c. milvipes*,
F. c. coatsi, *F. c. hendersoni*

Range: Asia and Africa.

ID:

- large bird
- head streaked with white
- brown upper parts
- white oval spots sometimes forming bars on tail

Similar species: *F. rusticolus* grey morph

Trade: Legal global trade increased in the 1980s, peaking the late 1990s.

Countries of import: U.A.E. is the major country of import. Qatar, Saudi Arabia also significant.

Countries of export/re-export: Major country of export is Pakistan, U.A.E. also significant. European countries.

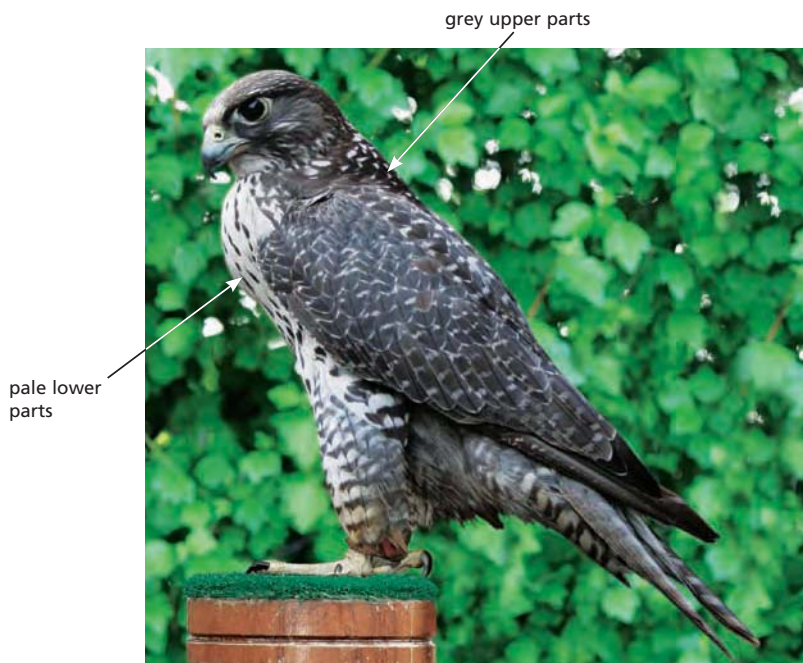
Purpose: Majority are traded for commercial purposes, also significant trade for personal use.

Source: Main sources are captive bred and wild caught.

For juveniles of this species, see page 12



Falco rusticolus (grey morph) – Gyrffalcon, Appendix I



Adult

Size: TL 48-60 cm
BW male 961-1320 g
BW female 1262-2100 g

Subspecies: N/A

Range: Arctic and subarctic regions of Europe, Asia and North America.

NOTE: This species has other colour morphs. See pages 8 and 9.

ID:

- grey upper parts
- pale lower parts
- largest and heaviest of the falcons

Similar species: *F. cherrug*

Trade: Legal global trade in *F. rusticolus* increased in the 1990s, and appears to be on the rise.

Countries of import: U.A.E. is the major importer, Qatar (primarily from the U.K.), U.K., Germany and U.S.A.

Countries of export/re-export: Canada, Germany, U.A.E., U.K. and U.S.A.

Purpose: Commercial, personal.

Source: Main source on CITES permits is listed as captive bred, but there are not many captive breeding facilities.

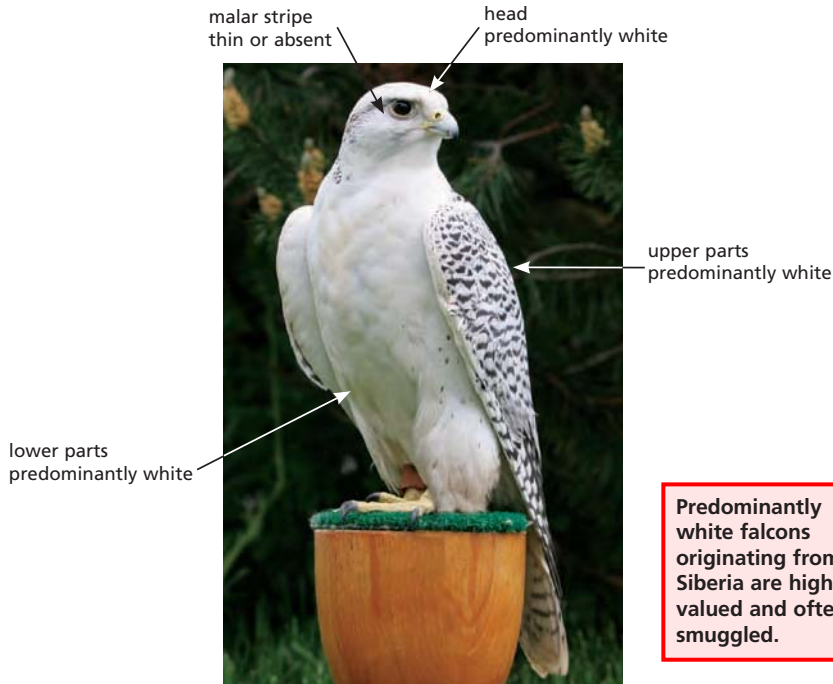
Juveniles:

- brown upper parts
- brown and white lower parts

For information on juveniles see page 13



Falco rusticolus (white morph) – Gyrfalcon, Appendix I



Adult

Size: TL 48-60 cm
BW male 961-1320 g
BW female 1262-2100 g

Subspecies: N/A

Range: Arctic and subarctic regions of Europe, Asia and North America.

NOTE: This species has other colour morphs. See pages 7 and 9.

ID:

- upper parts predominantly white
- lower parts and head predominantly white, with some black markings
- malar stripe is very thin or missing

Trade: Legal global trade in *F. rusticolus* increased in the 1990s, and appears to be on the rise.

Countries of import: U.A.E. is the major importer. Qatar (primarily from the U.K.), U.K., Germany and U.S.A.

Countries of export/re-export: Canada, Germany, U.A.E., U.K. and U.S.A.

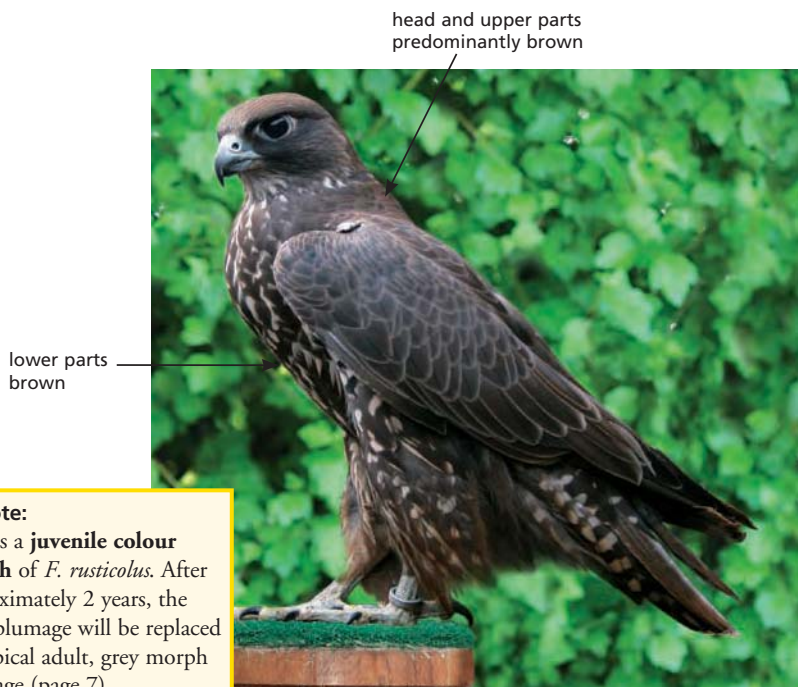
Purpose: Commercial, personal.

Source: Main source on CITES permits is listed as captive bred, but there are not many captive breeding facilities.

Juveniles: Juvenile white morph *F. rusticolus* has white upper and lower parts. The cere and eye ring are grey. Legs may be blue-grey when very young.



Falco rusticolus (black morph) – Gyrfalcon, Appendix I



ID Note:

This is a **juvenile colour morph** of *F. rusticolus*. After approximately 2 years, the dark plumage will be replaced by typical adult, grey morph plumage (page 7).

Juvenile

Size: TL 48-60 cm

BW male 961-1320 g

BW female 1262-2100 g

Subspecies: N/A

Range: Arctic and subarctic regions of Europe, Asia and North America.

NOTE: This species has other colour morphs. See pages 7 and 8.

ID:

- all upper parts and all of head predominantly dark chocolate brown
- lower parts dark

Trade: Legal global trade in *F. rusticolus* increased in the 1990s, and appears to be on the rise.

Countries of import: U.A.E. is the major importer. Qatar (primarily from the U.K.), U.K., Germany and U.S.A.

Countries of export/re-export: Canada, Germany, U.A.E., U.K. and U.S.A.

Purpose: Commercial, personal.

Source: Main source on CITES permits is listed as captive bred, but there are not many captive breeding facilities.

Adults: Adults of this colour morph will have typical adult grey morph plumage, and yellow cere, eye-rings and legs.



Falco mexicanus – Prairie Falcon, Appendix II



Adult

Size: TL 37-47 cm
BW 500-600 g

Subspecies: N/A

Range: Western United States and northern Mexico.

ID:

- white behind the eye
- white stripe at nape
- dark areas in “armpits”

Similar species: juveniles of *F. biarmicus*, *F. jugger*, *F. cherrug*.

Trade: *Falco mexicanus* is not common in illegal trade. Its plumage closely resembles the juvenile plumage of many other species.

In order to distinguish adult *F. mexicanus* from juveniles of other species, please refer to page **13**.



Accipiter gentilis – Northern Goshawk, Appendix II



North American variety



4 tail bars



Accipiter gentilis



Accipiter gentilis albidus

Size: TL 48–68.5 cm

BW male 517–1170 g (average 720 g)

BW female 820–1509 g (average 1130 g)

Subspecies: *A. g. gentilis*, *A. g. arrigonii*, *A. g. buteoides*, *A. g. albidus*, *A. g. schvedowi*, *A. g. fujiyamae*, *A. g. atricapillus*, *A. g. laingi*, *A. g. marginatus*, *A. g. apache*

Range: Europe, North America and northern Asia.

ID:

- white eyebrow stripe
- dark patch extending from eye to ear
- upper parts grey – female may be browner
- lower parts pale with fine horizontal stripes (very fine on N. American variety).
- iris orange to red (the older the bird, the redder the colour)
- 4 wide horizontal stripes on tail

Similar species: *F. jugger*, *F. peleginoides*

Trade: Commonly used in falconry in Europe and North America, but rarely used in the Middle East.

Juvenile:

- brown upper parts
- lower parts reddish yellow and spotted
- yellow iris (chick blue-grey iris). This iris will change to adult orange coloration by the 4th year.

For general *Accipiter* characteristics see page [v](#)



Juvenile *Falco* spp.



Falco biarmicus – juvenile



Falco peregrinus – juvenile



Falco jugger – juvenile



Falco cherrug – juvenile



Juvenile *Falco* spp.

Given that many falcons, especially juveniles, are similar in appearance, it is possible that a high-value specimen might be declared as some other species. Juveniles can be very difficult to identify. If you are unable to make an identification, be sure to detain the specimen and refer to an expert.

A common trait in juveniles of the genus *Falco*, is the blue-grey coloration of the ring around the eyes, the cere and sometimes the legs. In adults these features will be yellowish.

In many species, the juvenile will have **brown** upper parts, and will have **lower parts that are darker and more heavily marked than the adult**.

A mix of **brown** and **grey** plumage on the upper parts may indicate that the specimen is a juvenile in the process of replacing its brown, juvenile feathers with grey, adult feathers.

In the samples to the left note that *Falco biarmicus*, *F. peregrinus* and *F. jugger* all have more extensive brown coloration on the lower parts than the adults of the species. *Falco cherrug* shows yellowish feet; however the eye area and cere are the blue-grey colour of a juvenile. *Falco biarmicus* displays a yellowish colour on the eye area, cere and legs; however, the heavily streaked lower parts reveal it does not yet have its adult plumage.

Differentiation of juvenile *Falco* spp.



F. mexicanus



F. biarmicus



F. jugger



F. cherrug –

This species will be the largest.

They all have:

- brown upper parts
- pale under parts with varying degrees of brown spotting or streaking
- white forehead
- white eyebrow stripe
- dark eye stripe and malar stripe

F. rusticolus white morph – predominantly white, with brown markings.

F. rusticolus black morph – refer to page **9**

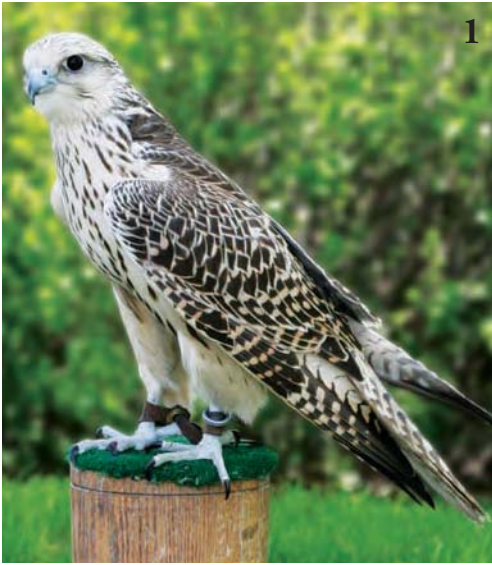
Similar Species: Adult *F. mexicanus* are quite similar to the juveniles of *F. biarmicus*, *F. jugger*, and *F. cherrug*. However, the adult can sometimes be distinguished from these juveniles by the presence of the yellow adult coloration in the cere and the ring around the eye.

ID Note:

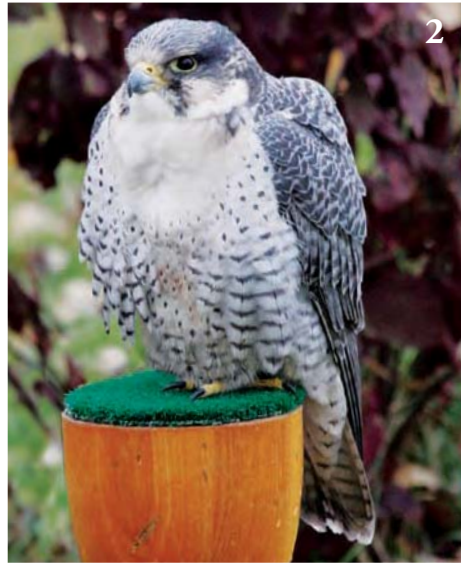
There is potential for juveniles of Appendix I species to be declared as Appendix II species or as adult *Falco mexicanus*. Verify the colour of the cere and eye ring of any juveniles. Refer to an expert.



Falco spp. – Hybrids



Hybrid *F. rusticolus* × *F. cherrug* juvenile



Hybrid *F. rusticolus* (white morph)
× *F. peregrinus*



Hybrid *F. rusticolus* (grey morph)
× *F. peregrinus*



Hybrid *F. rusticolus* × *F. pelegrioides*



Falco spp. – Hybrids

Hybrids may be mistaken for one parent or the other, or may demonstrate a variety of blends of parental characteristics.

Hybrids may also be bred in genetic mixtures of 50%-50%, 62.5%-37.5%, 75%-25%, or in combinations of more than two species.

The creation of falcon hybrids using artificial insemination to boost size, strength and vigour is quite common. Hybrids are unpredictably variable; they may have any mixture of characteristics, and the mix is not consistent – for example, one *F. rusticolus* × *F. peregrinus* can look very different from another.

When identifying hybrids it is best to compare it to the parent (or grandparent) species and then look to see if the bird has some traits common to these species. In most cases hybrids will be a 50-50 mix.

A few tips can assist with the identification of hybrids.

- If the bird is large (TL greater than 50 cm), it likely has *F. cherrug* or *F. rusticolus* genes.
- Hybrids of species of different sizes will usually result in a size between the two. For example, a *F. peregrinus* × *F. rusticolus* will almost always be larger than *F. peregrinus*, and smaller than *F. rusticolus*.
- A *F. rusticolus* × *F. pelegrioides* hybrid could easily weigh 200-300 grams more than a pure *F. pelegrioides* male.

Example 1

This bird with its white head, chest and legs indicates white *F. rusticolus* genes; however, the dark, densely marked back and the “caramel” markings seen on the wings indicate *F. cherrug* genes.

Example 2

This bird displays the general colour pattern of *F. peregrinus*; however, the very thin malar stripe and the amount of white on the head and neck indicates a cross with *F. rusticolus*. Both *F. peregrinus* and *F. rusticolus* have a white chest; however, the extent of the white in this hybrid indicates the presence of *F. rusticolus* genes.

Example 3

At first glance this bird could be identified as *F. rusticolus* with its brownish-grey coloration and the markings on the lower body. However, the suggestion of a thin malar stripe, the light area around the neck, and the light breast indicate *F. peregrinus* genes. (As well the distinct “salmon” colour in the light areas of the neck and breast are distinctive to the subspecies *F. peregrinus anatum*.)

Example 4

At first glance the bird has the general characteristics of *F. pelegrioides*. However, if you refer to page 5, you will notice the predominant malar stripe is missing. Crossing *F. pelegrioides* with a white or light *F. rusticolus* has reduced the malar stripe trait considerably.



Falco mexicanus – Prairie Falcon



Falco rusticolus – Gyrfalcon



Example of a falcon hood



Falco biarmicus – Lanner Falcon



Names	Scientific names	Page
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Altaicus	<i>Falco cherrug altaicus</i>	6
Anatum	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	4
Autour des palombes	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	11
Azor	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	11
Azor común	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	11
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<i>Falco jugger</i>	<i>Falco jugger</i>	3
<i>Falco kreyenborgi</i>	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
<i>Falco madens</i>	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	10
<i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>	<i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>	5
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
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<i>Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides</i>	<i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>	5
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Gyrkin	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	7
Gyrberegrine	<i>Falco rusticolus</i> X <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	14
Gyrsaker	<i>Falco rusticolus</i> X <i>Falco cherrug</i>	14
Gyrshaheen	<i>Falco rusticolus</i> X <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	14
Habicht.	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	11
Halcón blancuzco	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
Halcón borní.	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	2
Halcón común	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
Halcón de Berberia	<i>Falco peregrinoides</i>	5
Halcón de la praderas	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	10
Halcón gerifalte.	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	7
Halcón mejicano.	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	10
Halcón peregrino	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
Halcón peregrino de Babilonica	<i>Falco peregrinoides</i>	5
Halcón pradeño	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	10
Halcón real	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
Halcón sacre	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	6
Halcón viajero.	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
Halcón yággar.	<i>Falco jugger</i>	3
Hurr	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	7
Hypotriorchis	<i>Falco</i> spp.	iv
Iceland Falcon.	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	7
Jerfalcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	7
Jerkin	<i>Falco rusticolus</i> (mâle)	7
Kleinschmidt's Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus kreyenborgi</i>	4
Labrador Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	7
Laggar	<i>Falco jugger</i>	3
Laggarfalke	<i>Falco jugger</i>	3
Lagger	<i>Falco jugger</i>	3
Lanner.	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	2
Lanner falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	2
Lanneret	<i>Falco biarmicus</i> (mâle).	2
Lannerfalke	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	2
Lugger.	<i>Falco jugger</i>	3



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Peals	<i>Falco peregrinus pealei</i>	4
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
Prairie Falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	10
Präriefalke	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	10
Red-naped Shaheen.	<i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>	5
Saker	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	6
Shaheen.	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
Tercel	<i>Falco</i> spp. (mâle).	iv
Turel	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	7
Wanderfalke	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	4
Würgfalke	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	6

Credits

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