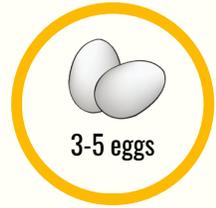
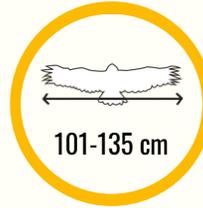




Gyr Falcon

Faucon gerfaut, *Falco rusticolus*



IDENTIFICATION

Its coloration varies greatly from one individual to another. There are three distinct colorations: white, gray and dark (very rare in Quebec). Its back and wings are lightly mottled, and its whiskers (black lines under the eyes) are very fine or even absent. Its pointed wings are characteristic of falcons. Females can be 40% larger than the male.



ECOLOGY

Nutrition

It feeds mainly on birds, such as ptarmigans and ducks, and occasionally on mammals. From a high perch, it locates its prey, then captures it by striking and pushing it against the ground rather than grabbing it from the air.

Breeding

The nest is built on a ledge on a cliff, sheltered from the snow. It returns to the same territory every year but does not use the same nest. The young males, being smaller, take their first flight at around 7 weeks of age, 2 to 3 days earlier than the females. The young are dependent on their parents for 3 to 4 weeks after fledging.

DISTRIBUTION

It nests in steep, mountainous or coastal regions of northern Canada, from the Northwest Territories to Nunavut. In winter, it is mainly found in open areas such as fields and can be seen throughout Canada and the northern United States.

STATUS AND POPULATION

The Canadian Christmas Bird Census indicates that winter population sizes have increased moderately since the 1970s. Global warming is greatly affecting the Arctic regions where Gyrfalcons live and poses a threat to the species. Unfortunately, juveniles and eggs are highly prized by poachers. The species is considered rare and secure!¹

¹Wild species of Canada report , 2015

