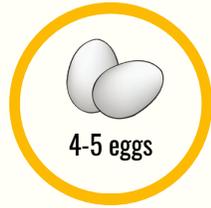
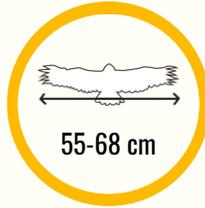




Merlin

Faucon émerillon, *Falco columbarius*

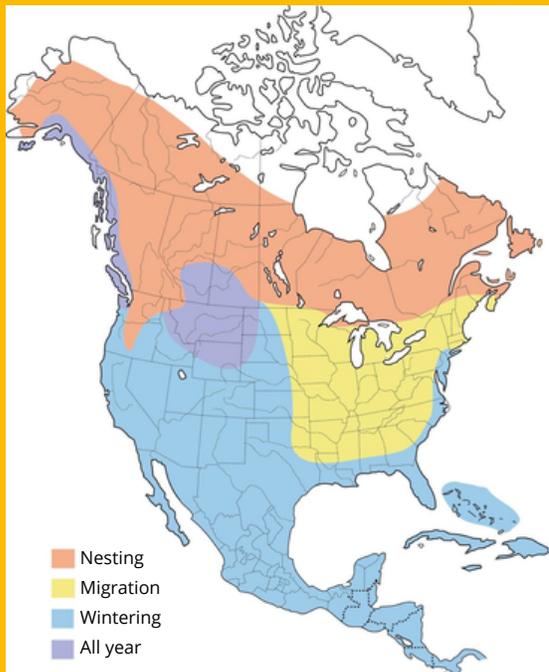


IDENTIFICATION

Its tail has broad black stripes and it has dark vertical stripes under his eyes, known as whiskers. Its chest is heavily streaked with dark spots. Males have gray or slate-blue backs, while females and juveniles have brownish backs.



25-32 cm



ECOLOGY

Nutrition

It feeds mainly on birds, such as swallows. It also eats small rodents and insects. It catches its prey in flight or hunts by ambush. Couples sometimes hunt together: one merlin chases a group of birds by attacking them from below, and the second arrives a few moments later, taking advantage of the confusion to catch a prey.

Breeding

Couples of merlins often use abandoned nests of other species, such as crows, hawks or squirrels. They often prefer nests close to water. The young take their first flight 4 to 5 weeks after hatching. They remain dependent on their parents for a further 1 to 4 weeks.

DISTRIBUTION

It nests throughout Canada, with the exception of northern regions, and migrates in winter to the West, the southern United States and Central America. Some individuals from southern Quebec may remain during the winter to take advantage of the abundance of prey around bird feeders. It generally lives in coniferous forests, in meadows containing forest patches, and is often found in open, peri-urban environments such as suburbs.

STATUS AND POPULATION

The species is considered secure.¹ Its population has doubled since the 1970s.^{2,3} This may be due to their increasing numbers in urban environments, where they take advantage of the abundance of House Sparrows to feed. So far, this species appears to be under little threat.

¹ Wild species of Canada report, 2015

² Canadian breeding bird survey, 2016

³ Christmas bird count