

Merlin

Faucon émerillon
Falco columbarius

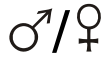
Migratory Species



Wingspan: M : 53 cm to 58 cm / F : 61 cm to 68 cm



The Merlin closely resembles the Peregrine Falcon. Its back is brown or slate-blue and its tail hosts large black bands. As with most falcons, we can see black bands under the eyes, which we call "whiskers".



The female is larger than the male and the bands on her chest are broader than his.



The Merlin resides mostly in conifer forests, but can sometimes be found in open spaces.



The Merlin feeds on many species of birds; it is even fast enough to catch hummingbirds! It also feeds on rodents, such as mice and rats.



The Merlin has a lifespan of about 10 years.



The Merlin pair often uses nests abandoned by other species, such as crows, buzzards, or squirrels. The nests are often located near a source of water. The female lays 4 to 5 eggs.



The young make their first flight attempt 25 to 30 days after hatching. They still remain dependant on their parents 1 to 4 weeks afterwards.



The population suffered a drastic decline in the 1950s and 1960s due to the use of harmful pesticides such as DDT. Since the banning of their use in North America, the population has increased in size, but has still not rebounded to what it was before the 1950s.



Birds of prey are at the top of the food chain; this is why they are most affected by the accumulation of trace pesticides distributed through the environment, such as DDT. DDT is not eliminated by animals but rather stored in their tissues. Residues accumulated in this way cause the shells of these birds' eggs to be very thin and fragile. The egg and the chick are thus both crushed by the weight of the female as she incubates the egg.