

Though the loss of any species is a pity, the disappearance of the peregrine falcon would be especially tragic. Among the fastest of all birds, it can dive at approximately 200 miles an hour. Speed, as well as a superb hunting technique and incredible eyesight, endeared the birds to falconers for thousands of years and helped publicize Canada's Arctic islands during medieval times. Marco Polo wrote that the Arctic Ocean contained "certain islands in which are produced numbers of gyrfalcons and peregrine falcons which are carried in many directions."

The crow-sized adult peregrine is 15 to 21

inches long, weighs 1¼ to 2 pounds, and has a 38 to 46-inch wingspread. The female, called the "falcon", is larger than the male, or "tiercel". Both prefer to eat pigeon, though they will dine on anything from mallard ducks to warblers. Fondness for pigeons rendered the peregrine falcon unpopular during World War II, forcing the British to destroy local peregrines to protect pigeons carrying secret messages. The passenger pigeon's demise probably hurt the falcon in North America; however, it survived, but only to fall victim to chemical poisoning.



Whales

The Whales—Blue, Humpback, Right, Grey—are all protected by the International Whaling Commission. The British, the Norwegians and Dutch, the United States and Canada had all stopped commercial whaling by 1972. Today Japan and the USSR take over 85 per cent of the annual catch.

The Blue Whale is the largest animal on earth (up to one hundred feet and weighing up to 145 tons). Its heart weighs as much as a thousand pounds, and its brain can weigh as much as twenty. Its arteries are as broad as fire hoses and are protected from the cold by blubber two feet thick. Once abundant around the world, it now numbers between three thousand and six thousand.

The Humpback, short (fifty feet), has never recovered from the hunting excesses of the

late nineteenth century and now numbers between seven thousand and eight thousand. **The Right Whale**, about sixty feet long with a large wartlike lump on its snout, was the first whale hunted—its name derives from the hunter's joyful shout, "that's the right one." It was almost wiped out during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It now has full protection, but its recovery rate is very slow and its numbers few.

The Grey Whale, about fifty feet long, was almost exterminated by whalers in the nineteenth century. It is now fully protected; and, it is pleasant to report, has made an impressive comeback and now numbers about seventeen thousand.

In addition to the whales which are protected fully, the International Whaling Commission sets quotas to protect other species.