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REPORT OF PEREGRINE FALCON (*FALCO PEREGRINUS*) IN
NEVIS, WEST INDIES

MARK MICHAEL LUDLOW^{1,2}

¹PhD Candidate, Ornitho-Archaeology, University of Wales – Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, Wales, United Kingdom; e-mail MMLBird@aol.com; ²Current addresses: 501 Slaters Lane #1022, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, USA; & Blue Roofed House (Blue Monkey), Oualie Lane South, Oualie Bay, Nevis, West Indies

Abstract. --- Mark Michael Ludlow observed, at a relatively close distance, a single adult Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) perched in a tree and thereafter flying. This observation occurred on the hillside directly above Oualie Bay, adjacent to the Caribbean Sea (IHO 1953: 14-15), within St. James Windward Parish, Nevis, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis, West Indies, on 21 January 2013.

Key words. --- *Peregrine Falcon*, *Falco peregrinus*, *Caribbean*, *Nevis*.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*FALCO PEREGRINUS*)

In the artificially conjoined listing of the geographically and ecologically separate and distinct islands of St. Kitts and Nevis, Raffaele *et al* (1998: 256) stated that Peregrine Falcon is a 'decidedly uncommon to rare and local from October to April'. Raffaele *et al* (1998: 461) list the species in the 'Locality Checklist' of that work as 'Very Rare or Vagrant – occurs less frequently than once every five years'. A fuller description of the current ranges of Peregrine Falcon can be found in the following references: AOU (1998: 34), Dickinson (2003: 93), and Clements (2000: 17).

NEVIS

Nevis is a compact oceanic island of volcanic origin with an area of circa 93 km² (circa 36 square miles), situated within the islands of the northern Lesser Antilles in the West Indies. Politically it is a portion of the two island country, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis. The island rises gradually from the shore to a central peak of circa 985 meters (circa 3232 feet) and exhibits a range of natural and secondary habitats which include: elfin woodland, montane forest, palm brake, grassland, coastal scrub, dry woodland, and farmland (Robinson and Lowery 2000).

THE RECORDED SIGHTING

On 21 January 2013, Mark Michael Ludlow observed a single adult Peregrine Falcon perched in a small tree circa 20' in elevation above the steeply sloping hillside of his personal residence. The tree was circa 25-30 feet from the front door of this residence. That residence was situated on the west side of Round Hill in a successional dry coastal forest overlooking Oualie Bay, St. James Lowland Parish, on the island of Nevis, West Indies.

The hillside above the observer's residence (c. 126 ft above sea-level to c. 1014 ft above sea-level - Ordnance Survey – Nevis, 1984) was in an undisturbed state of natural succession from Colonial period denudation of the

landscape for the agro-business purpose of cultivating the monocrop sugarcane. The location affords a sweeping vista of the hillside down to the Caribbean Sea.

The location was at: Longitude 17°11'56.85" North; and Latitude 62°36'32.43" West. The elevation was c. 126 feet above sea-level and c. 835 feet from the shoreline of the Caribbean Sea.

The bird was observed clearly without optical enhancements from a distance of c. 20 to 35 feet. No photographs were able to be taken but the identification of the single species was apparent to the observer in light of the length of time the bird was observed (circa 1.5 minutes) and the closeness of the observation. The bird was first encountered at a c. 45 degree angle above and facing the observer. The bird slowly moved its head from side to side and slowly fully flared its tail before departing and flying first slightly towards the observer and then horizontally to the observer's line of site. Prior to its departing flight the observer edged progressively closer until the bird displayed some agitation. The characteristic gray and black 'herring bone' look to the tail feathers, together with the mask-like head pattern, and the pointed wings observed while in flight, confirmed the identification (Sibley 2000; Raffaele *et al* 1998).

This observation becomes part of the efforts of the newly formed Nevis Ornithological Society to document all of the species of birds to be found solely on the island of Nevis (and proximal Booby Island). Historically bird species listings have artificially conjoined the two geologically and ecologically separate and distinct islands (the island of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and the island of Nevis). An example would be the 'Locality Checklist' within Raffaele *et al* (1998: 453-495). The Nevis Ornithological Society is also attempting to: 1) systematically review and evaluate reported bird sightings on the island of Nevis, as well as Booby Island, with a high degree of academic rigor; and 2) provide a central repository for those accepted reports that are solely for the island of Nevis.

A fuller significance of this sighting remains undetermined. Combined with past and future records, fuller patterns may become clearer. As in this case, and in the future, increasing numbers of bird watchers, field ornithologists, and researchers in the field, on comparatively remote and under frequented islands, for sustained periods of time, may account for increasing numbers of documented reports.

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