

First data on the migration of Siberian Peregrine *Falco peregrinus calidus* at the Straits of Messina and comments on its status in Italy

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Siberian Peregrine, *Falco peregrinus calidus*, breeds from northern Russia, Lapland and northern Siberia up to NE Europe. It is a medium to long distance migrant wintering in SE Europe and Asia down to Southern Africa. In Italy it is considered a rare vagrant with no more than 10 records (Fasce & Fasce in Brichetti *et al.* 1992). Observations on its migration at the Straits of Messina, Southern Italy and its status in Italy are reported here for the first time.

Methods - For methods of collecting data see Corso *et al.* (1999). The Peregrines of the race *calidus* have been identified using criteria reported in Forsman (1999), Clark (1999) and Corso & Malling Olsen (in press). Ageing is as for nominate Peregrine according to Forsman (1999). Date, time of passage, age and when possible the sex of each bird observed have been recorded. All the known data for Italy have been analysed in order to establish its status in Italy.

Results - Up to 1997, *calidus* had never been reported at the Straits of Messina (Giordano 1991; pers. obs.), most likely due to a lack of knowledge about its identification. From 1997 up to 2000, 30 individuals showing the characters of this race have been recorded (Tab.1) with an average of 7.5 ind./year (5-10). The positive trend noticed may be related to better identification skills, although it may also be real as odd big and pale Peregrines were not noticed frequently

Tab.1. Number of *Falco peregrinus calidus* counted per Spring (01.04-28.05) from 1997 to 2000 at the Sicilian side of the Straits of Messina, Southern Italy.

year	n. ind.
1997	5
1998	6
1999	9
2000	10
tot	30

before 1998 (even without giving them a name). Twenty-one adults (70%) and 9 juveniles (30%) have been recorded. The age-ratio is however surely influenced by the different difficulties in identifying adults vs. juveniles. The percentage of *calidus* versus Peregrine *brookei/peregrinus* observed is nearly constant in the different surveys as follows: '97-50%, '98-54.5%, '99-47.3%, '00-40%. While there is an increase in numbers of birds observed there is a slight decrease in proportion to the total number of Peregrines ssp. observed. The passage is concentrated from

the second decade of April to the first 15 days of May, with a peak during the first decade of May (43.3%) (Fig.1). Most birds pass in May (66.6%). Most juveniles occur during the first decade of May (45%). Extreme dates are 19.4-16.5.

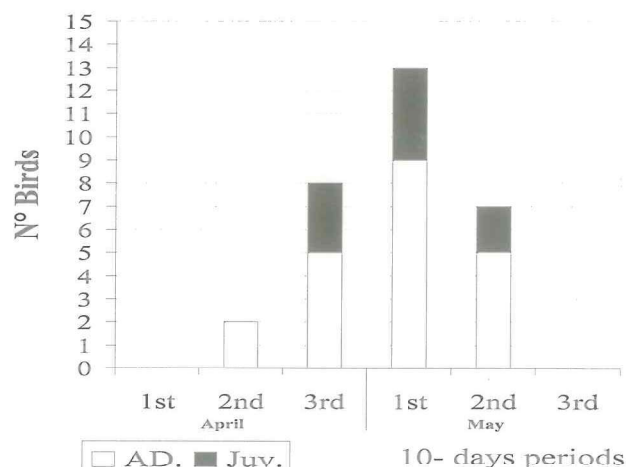


Fig. 1. N. of *F. p. calidus* (both ad.+ juv.) observed per 10-days period in April and May 1997-'00 at the Straits of Messina.

Status in Italy - Contrary to past statements, *calidus* is a widespread wintering bird and passage migrant in Italy. From personal observations it has been found wintering mostly in Sicily and Puglia with a few birds as far north as Emilia-Romagna and Veneto. In the former regions a wintering population of 20-50 birds (mostly juveniles) may be estimated. Most birds are concentrated in the largest wetland areas such as the Manfredonia Gulf and the Siracusa area. There is a regular but scarce presence also in Lazio and Tuscany and few records up to Lombardia, Piemonte and Liguria. Some birds showing *calidus* characters have been observed during autumn migration at Arenzano (GE) (pers. obs.). Migrants occur mostly along an Adriatic-Ionian migration flyway (coming from the east) with over-shooting birds on the Tyrrhenian side of Italy.

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