

Wayward peregrine falcon under care of Honolulu Zoo

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POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Jan 30, 2009



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This story has been corrected. [See below.](#)

A peregrine falcon that apparently flew thousands of miles from North America to Hawaii is now recovering at the Honolulu Zoo from a broken beak and other injuries.

"It apparently flew into something," said Keith Swindle, special agent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "It had broke its beak and cracked its keel," part of the bird anatomy similar to a human breastbone.

The falcon, a member of a breed that nests in Alaska and Canada, was found tired and thirsty in October near the Kahe Power Plant in Nanakuli. The Hawaiian Humane Society captured it and turned it over to exotic-bird experts at the Aloha Animal Hospital in Kahala.

Doctors at the hospital had the bird X-rayed, given antibiotics and force-fed because it could not eat.

"It was thin and weak and dehydrated," said veterinarian Dr. Douglas Chang. "Its upper beak was damaged and torn off."

Chang and fellow veterinarian Dr. Karin Fujitani used dental acrylic to build a prosthetic beak so the bird could eat on its own.

"He got to using it really good," Chang said.

As the bird devoured mice and chicks, the artificial beak eventually broke off. Chang used a metal pin to secure the second artificial beak.

In December the bird was turned over to the Honolulu Zoo so it could live in a larger cage and practice flying and hunting.

Swindle, of the Fish and Wildlife Service, said it is not unusual for a peregrine falcon, whose name means wanderer, to fly to Hawaii. As many as three are seen every winter in Hawaii.

And while this bird was in captivity, another falcon was spotted near Makapuu Point.

Flying 2,500 or so miles over ocean is not unusual for birds, either. Hawaiian petrels, an

endangered seabird, fly 7,500 miles during a single flight in search of food, Swindle said.

Peregrine falcons are found on all continents except Antarctica. They hunt by diving, as fast as 200 mph, into other birds in midair. The arctic peregrine migrates from Canada to South America during the winter.

Officials said the bird was a juvenile, and could not tell its gender. The usual difference between the sexes is that adult females are larger than males.

Honolulu Zoo veterinarian Dr. Ben Okimoto said the bird has lost its second artificial beak but grew back enough of its own beak to eat, feeding on day-old lifeless chicks.

At about 1.1 pounds the bird is still light for falcons, which usually weigh between 1.3 and 3.3 pounds.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to turn over the falcon to a bird specialist on the West Coast who can train the bird to hunt again.

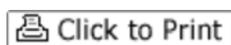
"The ultimate goal is to release the bird into the wild," Swindle said. "When you see it, it's a really wild bird. They're very aggressive and really active. They're not used to just sitting around."

CORRECTION

This article originally said an injured peregrine falcon found near Kahe Point weighed 11 pounds. It weighed 1.1 pounds. The story also said falcons usually weigh between 13 and 33 pounds. They weigh between 1.3 and 3.3 pounds.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20090130_Wayward_peregrine_falcon_under_care_of_Honolulu_Zoo.html



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