



What is for Lunch?

In an effort to restore the Peregrine Falcon to Virginia's skies, the Department of Wildlife Resources, DWR, began reintroducing the species in the mid 1980's. Today, the Peregrine has been removed from the federal endangered species list and can be found in limited numbers across the state, nesting on bridges, buildings and mountain cliffs or outcroppings.

In downtown Richmond, the Department has provided a nesting box for a pair of Peregrines and installed a [Falcon Cam](#) so citizens can watch the birds establish their territory and raise young each year. The diet of Peregrine Falcons consists of small to medium sized birds, which are captured in flight as the falcon dives on its prey from above. At times, scientists will collect data about which species are eaten by Peregrines and what they have fed their chicks by examining remains left behind at nest sites. This type of information assists researchers seeking to learn more about food preferences of this once rare species. It can also help researchers learn what other bird species are in the area and what habitat requirements they have.

Here is a partial list of what DWR biologists have found at the nest ledge and on other nearby buildings in past years. Most of the species have been identified by feathers left behind, others have been captured on the webcam.

- Yellow-billed cuckoo – popular prey item
- Northern Flicker
- European Starling
- Clapper Rail
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- Rock Pigeon
- Laughing Gull
- Common Grackle
- Banded captive-bred pigeons (escapes)

The Richmond Peregrine Falcons have laid their eggs, and the eggs should hatch in mid-May. As time permits, keep an eye on the webcam and try to identify "What is for Lunch?" If you cannot identify the species, write a description in the 4th column below. All data is useful and on another day you may get a better glimpse and can make an identification. Clues for identifying the species include; size, feather color and markings along with the color and shape of the bill. A bird field guide or any of the on-line bird identification webpages will help identify birds. For a list of bird species that have been seen in the Richmond, Virginia area visit the [Virginia ebird](#) webpage.

Once the data has been collected create a graph to show number of individuals of each species. Past observations have shown the yellow-billed cuckoo was a common food item in previous years. How often were they a prey item this year?

