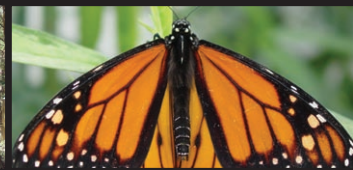
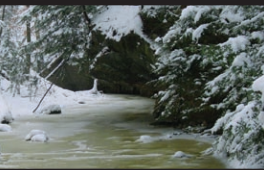




WILD TIMES

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THE MAGICAL *merlin*

A rare falcon is treated at the
Kevin P. Clinton Wildlife Center

THE WILDLIFE CENTER TREATS AND RELEASES MANY injured or orphaned birds of prey throughout the year including red-tailed hawks, barred owls, peregrine falcons and even the occasional bald eagle.

This spring, we had the opportunity to treat a very rare falcon, a merlin. It is an exciting event to see a merlin in the wild—imagine the privilege of seeing one up close! An immature female merlin was brought to the Wildlife Center on April 1. It was injured in downtown Cleveland, taken to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and then transferred to the Kevin P. Clinton Wildlife Center for care.

After x-rays and a physical exam by our veterinarian, the bird was treated for a coracoid fracture. The coracoid bone connects the sternum (breastbone) to the humerus (wing). It is critical for flight. This slow healing fracture required a bandaged wing and careful physical therapy to ensure flexibility and muscle strength. After almost a month of rehabilitation, exercise and strength training, the merlin was successfully released.

Merlins can be found throughout North America, but are not common in any particular location. They are rare in Ohio but can occasionally be spotted in mid-September through October and late March through early May. April is the peak time of their spring passage through Ohio. Wintering numbers of merlins in Ohio are low.



If you are an avid birder and want to see this falcon in the wild, the shores of the Great Lakes and the Atlantic coast can sometimes be productive. A fearless flier, merlins do not hesitate to fly out over open water when destination bound.

About the size of a pigeon, merlins stand 10-13 inches tall and have a 24 inch wingspan. During breeding season, they inhabit coniferous forests in the north as well as open prairie lands. They do not construct a nest, but prefer last year's crow or magpie nests to raise their young. For the remainder of the year they may be found in open spaces such as fields, grasslands, prairies, marshlands and lakeshores. Their diet consists mostly of other birds (80%), some bats, insects and small rodents. They are very agile hunters and fast fliers and usually catch their prey in flight.

Population trends are tied to habitat availability, but these intelligent raptors are starting to adapt to more urban environments and may be expanding their breeding range. They may be taking advantage of pigeon and starling overpopulation in city landscapes.

We hope this amazing bird was able to return to her migratory route, reach her breeding and nesting destination and continue her life without further incident. We hope she had a successful summer, raising the next generation of these amazing falcons.