

First Time Patient at the Wildlife Center

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The Wildlife Center admits many injured birds of prey throughout the year including: Red-Tailed Hawks, Barred Owls, Peregrine Falcons, and even Bald Eagles. However, it is very rare to see a Merlin Falcon in the wild let alone to be lucky enough to see one up close. A female Merlin was brought to the center on April 1st from downtown Cleveland; this is the first time that this small bird of prey has ever been cared for at the center. After being x-rayed and assessed by a vet that works with the Wildlife Center, she was treated for a coracoid fracture. This is a slow healing fracture that requires a bandaged wing and careful physical therapy to ensure flexibility and muscle strength. After almost a month of rehabilitation she was successfully released.

Merlin Falcons can be found throughout North America, but they are not common in any one area. They are very rare in Ohio and can normally only be spotted during migration which starts in mid September through October and they migrated back in late March through early May; April being the peak time of their spring migration. Wintering numbers of Merlins in Ohio are very low, but increasing annually.



If you are an avid birder and want to see this Falcon in the wild the best place to observe their migration is at Cape May in New Jersey. Merlins resemble the size of a pigeon and are commonly nicknamed a pigeon hawk or bullet hawk. They stand 10-13 inches tall and have a 2 foot wingspan. During breeding season, Merlins inhabit coniferous forests and make their nests in trees, cliffs, and crevices. A breeding pair is very territorial and needs a large hunting range. For the remainder of the year they prefer to live in open spaces such as: fields, grasslands, marshlands, and lakeshores. Their diet consists mostly of other birds (80%), some bats, insects, and small rodents. They are very agile hunters that usually catch their prey in flight. Populations have declined due to habitat loss, but these intelligent raptors are starting to adapt to more urban environments—taking advantage of pigeon and starling overpopulation in cities.