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To: Loren Croxton, U.S.B.S.F.W.
From: Dr. Clayton M. White & James H. Streater
Subject: Results of T.A.P.S. raptorial bird survey

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Introduction

This report outlines our findings resulting from a month survey (15 July to 11 August, 1970) of raptorial birds along the proposed T.A.P.S. route. We were instructed to be primarily concerned with the density and status of peregrine falcons along this route. Therefore much of what we say and conclude will concern that species. Because of the magnitude of such an undertaking, and in light of the function of the project, we confined the majority of our efforts to within one to two miles of the proposed route.

For our convenience in reporting our findings we have divided the route into sections. The limits of these sections, though somewhat arbitrary, are based on our judgment of habitat compatible to the needs of peregrine falcons.

Results

Valdez to Copper Center: Many miles of suitable looking cliff occur in this section; notably from Keystone Canyon to Tiekel. The lack of previous observation of peregrines in this region, and our not finding them, suggests that they indeed do not breed in the canyon. The habitat may be too enclosed to be suitable for peregrines. The lateness of the snow about the

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cliffs may also hinder the breeding of peregrines. Most cliffs are between one-half and one mile from the proposed pipeline.

--Breeding pairs: A Golden Eagle nest with one chick is located $\frac{1}{2}$ mile NE of Worthington Glacier and greater than $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the route. A Goshawk is reported to nest near the crossing of the Tonsina River, about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the route, though we were unable to confirm this.

Copper Center to Fielding Lake: The dirt banks along the Copper River in this region are marginal habitat for peregrines. We were unable to find any. In most cases these banks are two to five miles from the proposed route. In conversation we received an unverified report of peregrines near Gakona (seven miles from the route). Most of the habitat in this section of the route is unsuitable for peregrines. Harlan's Hawks were seen on the route west of Gulkana Airport and at Hogans Hills.

--Breeding pairs: Golden Eagle nest 3 miles east of the route opposite the north end of Summit Lake. Long established Gyrfalcon eyrie, though not in use this year, 6 miles east of the route on "the Hoodoos."

Fielding Lake to Delta Junction: This habitat once again appears suitable for peregrines. We found none, though there is a report of one near the junction of Rainy Creek and the Delta River. A Sharpshin Hawk was seen on the route near Darling Creek, and a large falcon, presumably a peregrine, passed our aircraft above the Delta River opposite Beales South Base ($3\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of the line). None of the cliffs in the canyon mouths have been known to harbor peregrines and we

saw no indication of their presence there. In 1968 eagles were found nesting in the area of Black Rapid and Donnelly Dome, about two to three miles from the line. We could not find eagles with active nests there this year.

Delta Junction to Fairbanks: The proposed pipeline route in this region crosses or passes several areas occupied by peregrines. The cliffs at Big Delta, along the Tanana River (5½ miles east of route) is a long standing eyrie site for peregrines. None were present this year. A cliff three-quarter miles west of the route had one adult peregrine present on an aerial survey (a pair was reported to be there in June by ADF&G), but none was found on a visit to the cliff by boat. The cliff had evidence of recent occupancy but no evidence of a successful nesting this year. A cliff three miles east of the route on the Chena River showed evidence of recent occupancy by peregrines, and has been used in the past, but none were present on our visit.

--Breeding pairs: A peregrine eyrie is located midway between Richardson Roadhouse and Shaw Creek Lodge, on the Tanana River, two and one quarter miles southwest of the route. This eyrie contained two young.

Fairbanks to South Bank of the Yukon River: This habitat is unsuitable for peregrines except where creeks cut occasional dirt banks or cliff faces on bluffs (most of these are marginal). A Goshawk and a Harlan's Hawk were seen seven and one half miles southeast of Hess Creek Camp along the road right-of-way.

--Breeding pairs: A Golden Eagle nest with one chick

is located two and one quarter miles east of the route at Mile 39 of the Elliott Highway. A Golden Eagle nest with one chick is located three miles southwest of the route on Hess Creek, six miles northwest of Hess Creek Camp.

Yukon River: The proposed line crosses the river near high dirt banks on the river's north side. No peregrines occupy these cut-banks.

--Breeding pairs: a peregrine with one chick and one addled egg occupied a cliff four and one half miles down river from the crossing point. The eyrie is opposite Sights Island on the south edge of the river. A peregrine eyrie with at least one chick was seen during aerial survey, twelve miles up river from the crossing point, on the north side opposite the Ft. Hamlin site.

Yukon River to Coldfoot: Most of the habitat in this region appears unsuitable for peregrines. Gyrfalcons may nest on some of the pinnacles of rock, but none were found. Harriers were seen near Olsen Lake and Fish Creek, both on the pipeline route. The South Fork of the Koyukuk River has cliffs suitable for peregrines. Though no nesting raptors were found there are several old eagle nests and a recently used raven or Gyrfalcon nest within eight miles of the line. An additional site within one mile east of the route and one and one half miles north of the Koyukuk River had contained ravens or Gyrfalcons this season.

Coldfoot to Atigun Pass: This section of the route runs along the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River and the Dietrich

River. It appears suitable for peregrines though there is a conspicuous lack of riverside bluffs (which could explain their absence). There is also a decided lack of suitable hunting habitat adjacent to the river (open expanses with muskeg, etc.). Many eagles occupy this region and their presence may effect in some way the suitability of the region for peregrines. It should be mentioned that most of the eagle nests in this region were between 3000 and 3300 feet elevation, while the river bed and pipeline route is near or below the 1400 foot level. There was evidence of several recently used raven nests that may have harbored gyrfalcons but another year's observation in June or early July would be needed to determine the precise status of gyrfalcons.

--Breeding pairs: golden eagle nest with one chick above Marion Creek, 2½ miles from route. golden eagle nest with two chicks between Nugget and Over Creeks, one mile west of line at 3000 feet. golden eagle nest with two chicks up Gold Creek, 3 miles west of the line. golden eagle nest with one chick about one mile east of line near Junction Philip Smith Mts. and Chandalar.

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Atigun Pass to Galbraith Lake: Once again golden eagles are prime species.

--Breeding pairs: golden eagle nest with one chick at 4600 feet (river at 3000 feet) ½ mile east of the line at a point numbered 4474 opposite Fork on west side of Atigun River. Probable gyrfalcon nest (adult seen soaring by Bryan Sage; also ptarmigan wings in nest) 2½ miles west

of the line up the West Fork of the Atigun River.

Galbraith Lake to Franklin Bluffs (Sagavanirktok River):

In this region the proposed route runs through a deep canyon along the Atigun River to the Sagavanirktok River. Good habitat for both falcons and eagles is present. The first good falcon bluffs occur on the Sagavanirktok River (south edge) about five miles south of the mouth of the Lupine River. The last falcon habitat gives out at the north end of the Franklin Bluffs. This summer the north slope experienced a low in the microtine rodent cycle. Few hawks were nesting and those that did had small broods. Three single adult rough-legged hawks not associated with nesting sites were on the bluff opposite Sagwon air strip; also a pair on Franklin Bluffs. A pair of peregrines was on the cliff opposite Sagwon, but no eyrie was found. An adult gyrfalcon, and what appeared to be a nesting site was on a bluff six miles north of Sagwon on the right limit.

--Breeding pairs: Two recently fledged gyrfalcons near Galbraith on a hill side one mile northwest of the route. Their eyrie is believed to be either on the hill to the northwest of the route or on the cliffs at the southeast end of the canyon. Both localities had sites that appeared to be used recently. Golden eagle nest with one chick $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of the route at 4700 feet. Golden eagle nest with one chick, middle of canyon on the northwest side at 4000 feet. Golden eagle nest recently lined with green boughs, with adult present but no young, one and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile east of the route and 3 miles northeast of

the mouth of Accomplishment Creek. Rough-legged Hawk nest with one chick, $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Lupine, $\frac{7}{10}$ mile from route (first good river bluff). Rough-legged Hawk nest with one chick at the mouth of the Lupine River, one and $\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of the route. Gyrfalcon eyrie with at least two young on the wing at the mouth of the Lupine River, one and $\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of route. Rough-legged Hawk nest with 3 young on pinnacle opposite Sagwon air strip, one mile west of route. Rough-legged hawk nest with two abandoned eggs on bluff on east limit, six miles north of Sagwon. Peregrine falcon eyrie with two young on Franklin Bluffs, $\frac{8}{10}$ mile south of VABM triangulation point "Bruce," two miles east of the route. Peregrine falcon eyrie with three young on Franklin Bluffs, opposite 166 Lake, three miles east of the route.

Conclusions

The following conclusions will sum up our findings and impressions gained this summer:

1. All nests and eyries found this summer are far enough from the proposed pipeline route that they won't be physically disturbed by the actual mechanics of pipeline or road construction.
2. During the construction we anticipate many more buteo, accipiter, and owl nests to be found and some actually destroyed as trees are removed. This probably will present no real problems to the species involved. Nesting habitat for such species is in unlimited supply peripheral to the route, and the species at present appear to be numerically healthy.

3. The only active or historically known peregrine eyrie or cliff that could harbor peregrines, less than one mile from the proposed pipeline route, is on the Salcha River. Construction of the access road may come closer to suitable cliffs although this was not indicated on the proposal given to us.

4. Along the Dietrich River many old eagle nests were found in the mouth of canyons within one mile of the route. However the nests in actual use were located rather far back on the mountain faces or in adjoining canyons. We are tempted to suggest that human activity may have caused such a shift in nest site placement or utilization.

5. The proposed split between pipeline and road in the area north of Galbraith Lake (for economic reasons, probably) should be given serious consideration. It is our feeling that pipeline should parallel road to minimize environmental disturbance in that area.

6. There is one major problem that concerns us; the ready accessibility to nesting sites of such species as peregrines and gyrfalcons that will be provided by the construction of the access highway. This is especially criticized in light of the domestic demand for these two species, their present numerical status, and the threat of the ever decreasing numbers of peregrines caused by pesticides. Once the road is in one can foresee that other access roads will be built to villages, etc., adjacent to the pipeline or even rather distant from it. This will further open up falcon habitat to easy accessibility or exploitation. We cannot urge strongly enough that there be some control for limited access and human use of the road.

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