Solitaire Peregrine Falcon Rescue Attempt

On November 1, 2017 a juvenile peregrine falcon was discovered by deck mechanics fighting with another juvenile peregrine falcon in the vessel’s port-side stinger wench room. The mechanics noticed that one of the birds was injured and could not fly. It was carefully captured and placed in a temporary enclosure. They then notified the onboard Marine Fauna Observer.

Upon initial examination, the left wing had a deep puncture wound in the carpal joint. Coagulated blood covered the wound, making it difficult to assess depth of injury. The falcon appeared to have full range of motion in both wings. Betadine ointment was applied to the injury, and in an effort to minimize stressing the bird, the bird was placed in a quiet part of the vessel where it would be difficult for most crew members to have access to. Raw chicken wrapped in feathers from parts of a freshly dead egret (left-overs from another peregrine falcon) was left in the enclosure with the falcon along with some water. The feathers are needed for the falcon to produce a “casting” or “pellet”.
Marine Fauna Observer assesses the injury

With help from the deck mechanics, betadine ointment is applied to prevent infection
The next day, the Marine Fauna Observer was able to flush out the wound with sterile saline to better assess the depth of injury. Fragments of small bone were exposed once the blood rinsed away. The Marine Fauna Observer contacted Dr. Ronald Hines, a Veterinarian in Brownsville, Texas who happens to also be a raptor rehabilitator. Photos of the injury were emailed to Dr. Hines who replied:

"I see bone fragments protruding from the wound. If those bone fragments are from the smaller of the two metacarpal bones and the larger one is still intact, I might be able to fix it satisfactorily. But if it is the larger of the two; or if both are shattered, [the falcon] will probably never be releasable. I am not allowed to keep wildlife indefinitely, but the zoo is."

Dr. Hines reached-out to Texas Game Warden, Derrick Lopez for assistance with the logistics involved in getting the animal across the US/Mexico border. At the same time, Solitaire Captain, Jan Herman, was working on the logistics of getting a falcon clearance to ride in a Helicopter.

The following day, on November 3rd, the “all clear” was given to have the falcon transported via helicopter. A 40.5cm x 40cm x 60cm travel box weighing 9.2kg (with bird inside) was fabricated the day before by deck mechanic, Rodrigo Oya Martinez.
He also built a roosting pole for the falcon to perch on.

The falcon was loaded onto the helicopter at approximately 10:00am and was flown to Matamoros Heliport where Texas Game Warden, Derrick Lopez, was arranging pick up. As of 20:00 (local time), the bird is still in possession of ASESÁ staff at the heliport. Officer Lopez has not been able to acquire the proper permit for the falcon to leave Mexico as a result of CITES coming into play. CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild. What this treaty fails to note is that migratory animals cross borders every year on their own. This peregrine falcon was likely just
recently within the US and has migrated to Mexico for the winter months. USDA will not allow the falcon to cross the border and has left us with no choice but to release the bird on Mexican soil and hope for its survival.
The peregrine is renowned for its speed, reaching over $320 \text{ km/h (200 mph)}$ during high speed dives while chasing prey. This makes the peregrine falcon the fastest member of the animal kingdom. Along with many other birds of prey, the peregrine falcon's population took a hard hit during the mid-20th century due to the use of DDT and other chemical pesticides. In 1970, the species was listed as “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act.

By 1999, peregrine falcon numbers were stable enough to remove the species from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species. It is, however, still federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. The original 1918 statute implemented the 1916 Convention between the U.S. and Great Britain (for Canada) for the protection of migratory birds. Later amendments implemented treaties between the U.S. and Mexico, the U.S. and Japan, and the U.S. and the Soviet Union (now Russia).

Special thanks to the entire AllSeas crew for working together and making this possible.

Special thanks to the deck mechanics, especially Arend Witvoet and Rodrigo Oya Martinez, who found and caught the injured falcon, designed and built its enclosure and travel box, and helped with medicating and feeding.

Special thanks to Captain, Jan Herman, for helping with the logistics of transferring the falcon to land; Client Representatives: Jack Bullock for always pointing me in the right direction, and Mike Kendricks for lending me his calling card to communicate with Texas Game Warden; Second Mate, Mika Spee, for helping me with the Helicopter manifest and carrying the falcon and travel box across the vessel; HLO Crew and Safety Officer, Mel Falzon, for making sure the falcon was placed safely and properly onto the helicopter; Medic, Nic Aguilan, for providing medical supplies and helping to label the travel box; Galley crew for raw chicken to feed the falcon...

... and a very special thanks to the people on land: ASESA for allowing a falcon as a passenger on their helicopter and for their Chief Contract Manager, Iván Soberón Azuar, who has looked after the bird upon arrival; Dr. Ronald Hines and his son of Brownsville, TX for offering to provide medical treatment to the falcon once it is in their possession; Texas Game Warden Derrick Lopez for attempting to arrange logistics