

Falcon adopts skyscraper

She was bred to help repopulate the countryside, but how are you going to keep a girl down on the farm once she's seen the big city?

Scarlet, a peregrine falcon bred in a program to repopulate the Northeast with the rare bird, is now the happy resident of the United States Fidelity & Guaranty Company's Inner Harbor skyscraper.

Tom Cade, the Cornell University ornithologist heading the program, said the bird adopted the 35-story Baltimore building after being released on an island off the Maryland coast.

The bird was one of 150 that Cornell has sent into the wilds in the Northeast. But several have moved to the nooks and crannies of urban buildings, from which they feast off city pigeons.

Mr. Cade said the Baltimore skyscraper makes an ideal cliff for the bird.

"It is made almost entirely of glass, but each floor is surrounded with granite ledges and railings and the glass is tinted so that while the falcon can be seen perched only 3 feet away, she can't see in."

He said the bird first appeared at the Baltimore Zoo in February, and moved to the U.S.F. & G. Building after feeding on pigeons and starlings at the zoo.

Priscilla Dieter, speaking for the insurance firm, said the falcon's corporate life has been relatively troublefree.

"Scarlet has become such a part of the building that she even flies down to the ledge outside the company's cafeteria at 1 o'clock to take her lunch with us.

"Unfortunately, we had stuffed peppers last week while she was having her pigeon. The contrast prompted a few lost appetites."

At first, the bird preened in the glass, apparently thinking the reflection was a male, Ms. Dieter said. Now the company has put sand-filled nesting boxes on the 32d floor in the event she finds a mate from a new group of falcons being released on a nearby island.

The peregrines can see up to 15 miles, he said, and can dive after prey at up to 200 miles an hour.

The ornithologist said the birds adapt well to cities, which are overrun with pigeons and starlings. In cities, he said, the falcons have no hunters or great-horned owls to prey on them.

In their more plentiful days, he said, the peregrines lived in such places as the St. Regis Hotel in New York, the Phila-



U.S.F. & G. ledge is falcon's cliff.

delphia City Hall tower, the Sun Life Insurance Company in Montreal and an old post office in Washington.

Mr. Cade said he wanted to put some falcons on the old, gothic Woolworth building in Manhattan but decided there were too many pet pigeons kept on apartment rooftops that might attract the birds.

He said better sites would be in downtown Washington, which is nearly vacant of pets and inhabitants at night, and an abandoned railroad bridge of natural, quarried rock across the Ohio River at Louisville.

"Sometimes the sky there is literally clouded with tens of thousands of pigeons," Mr. Cade said.

The program is run by Cornell University's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.