

HISTORY OF PEREGRINE FALCON NESTS

in or near Pittsburgh, PA

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[The National Aviary Peregrine Webcams Program](#)



Notations: Birds are listed as "Name (sex, year of birth – year of death)." Usually the volunteer observers most invested in a particular nest site are given the honor of naming "their" birds. Names are given at banding or by nest watchers.

Caution: Readers of this document will note that much of the information on offspring concerns mortality. This is because the bands that identify individual birds are nearly impossible to see at a distance. Most bands are read when a bird is recovered when it is injured or dead.

History of the peregrine falcon nest on the Gulf Tower, downtown Pittsburgh:

Background

Peregrines were first noticed in downtown Pittsburgh in the winter of 1989 – 1990 by Charles Bier and Steve Branca. In early 1991, with PA Game Commission approval, nest boxes containing gravel substrate were installed at the Gulf Tower by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) to provide a suitable breeding site. One box was placed on the south face of the building, the other on the north. The birds successfully nested that spring (1991). They used both nest boxes but preferred the north box facing the Allegheny River. The south nest box was removed when it deteriorated.

Breeding Pairs

1991 – 1997: Boris and Natasha

Boris (male, 1989-2003): released (hacked) in northeastern Tennessee in June 1989 as part of the peregrine falcon recovery program.

Natasha (female, 1989-1997): released (hacked) in the Shenandoah Mountains on the Virginia-West Virginia border in June 1989 as part of the peregrine recovery program.

Boris and Natasha fledged a total of 19 young.

1998:-2002: Boris & Tasha

Tasha (female, approximately 1996 – 2010): un-banded.

Arrival of Tasha: A new un-banded female was observed at the nest during the 1998 nesting season. She was banded that spring when her chicks were banded and later nicknamed Tasha.

Boris and Tasha fledged a total of 20 young.

2003-2010: Louie & Tasha

Louie (male, 2002 – present): Hatched at University of Pittsburgh, 2002.

Arrival of Louie: Birds of prey fight for territorial domination and sometimes kill their rivals during these encounters. In early March 2003 Tasha had laid a few eggs when a rival female arrived. The rival laid eggs in the same nest box and the two females disappeared, apparently to fight for the territory. While Boris was left incubating 6 eggs, a younger male peregrine arrived and they fought for the site. Boris lost the fight and on 11 April 2003 his beheaded body was found on the nest box gravel, visible in the falcon camera.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) collected Boris' body and later removed the abandoned eggs from the nest box. Within a week two peregrines courted at the site and the female laid 4 eggs. When the dust cleared we discovered the pair was Louie and Tasha. Louie is one of the first offspring of the original peregrine pair at the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning, hatched in 2002 by Dorothy and Erie (see below).

Louie and Tasha fledged a total of 24 young.

2010–Present: Louie & Dori

Dori (female, 2010 – present): Hatched at Landmark Building, Akron, Ohio in 2007 where she was named Mary Cleo when banded.

Arrival of Dori: Tasha had laid two eggs by 19 March 2010 when a rival female showed up. Observers could hear loud peregrine warning calls on the webcam on the night of 19-20 March though the rival was not seen on camera. At dawn on 20 March, Tasha left the nest to challenge her rival. By 5:45pm Dori had won the site. Tasha was never seen again. Dori began laying 3 eggs on April 2 in the same scrape as Tasha's eggs. All 5 eggs hatched.

Louie and Dori have fledged 5 young.

Offspring histories

1991: 4 Chicks

July 15, 1991 – 2 of the fledglings (a male and female) perished as they simultaneously crashed into glass on a Gateway Center building;

“Pop” (male, 1991-2000) - Nested in Detroit, 1992-1999.

1992: 3 Chicks

(female, 1992 - unknown) - Dan Brauning (PGC) told WPC that a 1992 female from the Gulf Tower was seen in Burlington, VT; no further information.

1993: 2 Chicks

“H” (female, 1993 - present) - Nested in Detroit in 1994-1999. Primaries damaged. Became an educational bird at Detroit Zoo in 1999 or 2000.

(male, 1993): Died 10 Aug 1993

1994: 2 Chicks

1995: 4 Chicks

(male, 1995) - Broke his wing while fledging, died July 1995

1996: 3 Chicks

(male, 1996 - unknown) - Paired in Elyria, OH in 1997. No nest.

1997: 1 Chick

1998: 4 Chicks

(female, 1998 - unknown) - Nested at Bohn Building, Cleveland OH in 1999

1999: 4 Chicks

SW (female, 1999 - present) - Nested at LTV Steel in 2001 with younger brother *W/C. Moved to Cleveland's Terminal Tower in 2002. Lays eggs earlier than other peregrines (like her mother Tasha).

(female, 1999): Dead in Toronto in 2001.

2000: 4 Chicks

(female, 2000-deceased) - Nested at Canada Trust Building, London, Ontario starting March 2001. Fledged 4 young in 2005, per 7 June 2005 e-mail from Dan Brauning, PGC.

(male, 2000-2002) - Nested at LTV Steel in Cleveland with sister in 2001.

Found dead at Eastlake Power, Cleveland OH, Oct 2002.

2001: 4 Chicks

(female, 2001 - unknown) - Observed in Toronto in June 2002. Nested at Niagara Falls in 2003, produced 2 young. No positive ID since 2003.

2002: 4 Chicks

(male, 2002-2004) - Bird tracked with satellite telemetry. Found dead in Pittsburgh's Strip District in Feb 2004, apparently from severe impact trauma. Telemetry data showed him earlier in NJ and vicinity of NYC.

(male, 2002 - present) - Nests at Lakeview Generating Station in Mississauga, ON. In 2005, fledged 3 young. In 2008 moved nest site to a Toronto high-rise condo.

(female, 2002 - unknown) - Bird tracked with satellite telemetry. Last report before the telemetry unit battery failed was from south Philadelphia, 2003.

2003: 4 Chicks

Pittstop (female, 2003 - present) - Injured July 2003, not releasable. Educational bird at Medina Raptor Center, Spencer, Ohio.

(female, 2003 - unknown) – Tracked by satellite telemetry. The last report from this bird was in Cleveland in November 2003.

2004: 4 Chicks

(female, 2004 - unknown) – Injured in October 2004, not releasable. Lives at Zoo America in Hershey, PA.

2005: 3 Chicks out of 5 eggs

E2 (male, 2005 - present) – In spring 2008 began nesting at University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning.

2006: 5 Chicks

Pittsburgh Pete (male, 2006 - present) – Nested at Burlington Lift Bridge, Burlington, Ontario in 2008. Was challenged and severely injured by a rival in June 2008. Rehabilitated by Judy Bailey, Hamilton, ON. Unreleasable. Lives at Mountsberg Raptor Centre, Mountsberg, ON.

(female, 2006 - unknown) – Found with broken wing in Follansbee, WV, June 2009. Lives at Elmwood Park Zoo, Norristown, PA since October 2009.

2007: 4 Chicks

(male, 2007) Found injured in Clairton, PA 14 November 2007. Died that night of injuries.

2008: 2 Chicks out of 4 eggs

2009: 2 Chicks out of 5 eggs

2010: 5 Chicks. 2 eggs by Tasha, 3 eggs by Dori.

Blue (female, 2010) Died after hitting the Grant Building, Pittsburgh, 13 July 2010.

History of the peregrine falcon nest at the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning, in Oakland:

Background

Peregrines did not nest at the University of Pittsburgh until 2002. In the 1990s the National Aviary, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the University of Pittsburgh established a nest box on the Cathedral of Learning but the box was never used and was subsequently removed. Between 1998 and 2000 adult peregrines were reported occasionally and a peregrine chick thought to have fledged in Oakland was injured, rehabilitated and released near the Cathedral of Learning. Then in January 2001 Kate St. John noticed a pair of peregrines in courtship flight and monitored other behaviors consistent with nesting. Although no nest was found, the PA Game Commission and the University of Pittsburgh agreed to allow WPC to install a nest box in February 2002. The first successful nesting occurred that spring (2002).

Breeding Pairs

2002 – 2007: Erie & Dorothy

Erie (male, 1998 - 2007) - Hatched 1998 at the Rhodes State Office Tower in Columbus, OH.

Dorothy (female, 1999 - present) - Hatched 1999 at the Firststar Center in Milwaukee, WI.

On 11 March 2007 Erie fought and killed Pulse, an invading male hatched in Cleveland in 2004.

Erie and Dorothy fledged a total of 22 young.

2008 – present: E2 & Dorothy

E2 (male, 2005 – present): Hatched at Pittsburgh's Gulf Tower in 2005.

Arrival of E2: As of October 2007, Erie was no longer seen at the Cathedral of Learning. Dorothy appeared to be alone for about a month. Then in November 2007 a male peregrine began courting her. His behavior suggested he was new to the site. The new male was identified using webcam images when he nested with Dorothy in spring 2008. He is the second Erie (a grandson) and was nicknamed E2.

Dorothy and E2 have fledged a total of 12 young.

Offspring histories

2002: 4 Chicks

Louie (male, 2002 - present) - Nests at the Gulf Tower in Pittsburgh since 2003.

2003: 4 Chicks

Stammy (male, 2003 - present) - Nests at the Stambaugh Building in Youngstown Ohio, since 2005.

Hathor (female, 2003 - present) - Nests at the Macomb County Building in Mt. Clemens, MI, since 2005.

Belle (female, 2003 - present) - Nests on the bell tower at the University of Toledo since 2007.

2004: 4 Chicks

Maddy (female, 2004 - present) - Nests at I-480 bridge, Valley View, Cleveland since 2007.

2005: 3 Chicks out of 4 eggs

Crash (male, 2005 - unknown) - Hit by car on 18 June 2005. Rehabilitated by a falconer and released on 01 February 2006.

(female, 2005 - unknown) - Seen in West Mifflin, PA on 09 August 2006, on a picnic table.

2006: 3 Chicks out of 4 eggs

2007: 4 Chicks

(female, 2007) – Found dead near Amherstburg, Ontario, January 2008. Probably hit by a car.

Beauty (female, 2007 - present) - Nests in Rochester, NY since 2009.

2008: 3 Chicks out of 4 eggs

Sky (male, 2008) – died 24 June 2008 after hitting a window of the Rand Building a few blocks from the hatch site.

2009: 4 Chicks

(female, 2009) – Found dead inside a chimney on Webster Hall on Fifth Avenue, 15 October 2009.

2010: 5 Chicks

Green Boy (male, 2010) – Found dead inside the chimney on Webster Hall on 24 June 2010. Discovered because, Yellow, the female sibling trapped with him, made noise. She was rescued by the PA Game Commission and sent to rehabilitation.

Yellow (female, 2010) - Formerly trapped in Webster Hall chimney, she was rehabilitated and released. Later found dead on 8 August 2010, apparently crashed into a building at Allegheny Center, Pittsburgh.

History of the other peregrine falcon nests in the Pittsburgh area:

Monaca East Rochester Bridge, Beaver County:

Background

Scott Gregg first noticed a pair of peregrines at the bridge in February 2007. When the nest was found, the condition of the site suggested that peregrines had been breeding there for several years although there was no observation of breeding before 2007.

Breeding Pairs

2007: unbanded male & Kelly. May have arrived before 2007

(male, unknown): unbanded.

Kelly (female, 2003 - unknown) - Hatched 2003 at 125 S.Wacker St, Chicago, IL.

This pair fledged 2 young in 2007.

2008 - 2009: unbanded male and MariK

MariK (female, 2006 - present) – Hatched 2006 at Rachel Carson Office Bldg, Harrisburg, PA.

Arrival of MariK: In March 2008 a new female challenged Kelly and repeatedly chased her away from the site. When that spring's chicks were banded the new female was identified and nicknamed MariK by Scott Gregg.

Identity of adults was not reconfirmed in 2009.

This pair fledged a total of 7 chicks in 2008 and 2009.

2010: No nest on this bridge. Peregrines observed in the vicinity.

Offspring histories

2007: 2 chicks.

(male, 2007) - Found dead in Louisville, Ohio, Nov 2007. Probably electrocuted.

2008: 4 chicks.

(female, 2008) - Found dead on the Monaca Bridge in June 2008, apparently hit by a car.

2009: 3 chicks.

(male, 2008) - Died at Pittsburgh International Airport, 31 August 2009.

2010: No nest found on this bridge.

Peregrines observed in the area during the breeding season. May have nested elsewhere.

McKees Rocks Bridge, Allegheny County:

Background

Joe Fedor, Jr. first reported a pair of peregrines at the McKees Rocks bridge in spring 2008. The PA Game Commission found the nest with assistance from PennDOT.

Breeding Pairs

2008 - 2009: Bravo & unbanded female

Bravo (male, 1999 – unknown) – Hatched at Cleveland, Ohio’s Terminal Tower in 1999.

(female, unknown) – Unbanded, origin unknown.

Peregrines have fledged at least 5 chicks from this bridge. May have nested here prior to 2008.

2010: pair’s identity not confirmed

Offspring histories

2008: 0 chicks out of 2 eggs

2009: 3 chicks.

2010: 2 chicks observed in prey exchange. Not banded. Nest could not be found.

Westinghouse Bridge, Allegheny County:

Background

A nesting pair of peregrines attacked PennDOT workers when they began maintenance on the Westinghouse Bridge in Spring 2010. The PA Game Commission confirmed the nest and banded 3 chicks.

Breeding Pairs

2010 - present: banded male (unidentified) & Val (a.k.a. Storm)

Brian (male, unknown) – male is banded but bands not identified yet. Nicknamed Brian by PennDOT employees.

Val (female, 2005 – present) – Hatched at Bank One in Canton, Ohio in 2005 where she was named Storm when banded.

PennDOT employees nicknamed her Val when they discovered her.

Offspring histories

2010: 3 Chicks out of 5 eggs.

Tarentum Bridge, connects Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties:

Background

A pair of peregrines was reported at this bridge a year before Dan Yagusic identified them in December 2009. In both 2009 and 2010 the PA Game Commission searched for a nest without success. No fledglings have been seen at this site.

Breeding Pairs

2009 – present: banded male from Pitt & Hope (from Hopewell, VA)

(male, 2008 – present) – Hatched at University of Pittsburgh in 2008.

Hope (female, 2008 – present) – Hatched at the Benjamin Harrison Bridge, Hopewell, VA in 2008 and hatched in the Shenandoah Mountains

Offspring histories

No offspring observed yet.

62nd Street Bridge, Allegheny County:

Background

Dan Yagusic first noticed a pair of peregrines at the bridge in spring 2007. At least two eggs were laid on a steel beam but the nest failed, probably due to exposure and weather. To improve chances of breeding success, the PA Game Commission installed a nest box in January 2008.

Breeding Pairs

2007- 2008: Bo & Shenandoah

Bo (male, 2005 – unknown) – Hatched in 2004 at Federal Reserve Bank, Boston.

Shenandoah (female, 2002 - unknown) - Hatched in 2002, at the Benjamin Harrison Bridge, Hopewell, VA. Hatched in the Shenandoah Mountains by Shawn Padgett.

This pair may have arrived prior to 2007.

2008: no peregrines

The bridge was under construction for more than six months. The peregrines left. No nesting.

2009 and 2010: single female

Mary Cleo (“Dori”) (female, 2007 – present) - Hatched in Akron, OH in 2007. Only this single female was seen at the bridge in 2009 and winter 2009-2010. Mary Cleo left the bridge in March 2010 and won the Gulf Tower site. (Renamed Dori by Make-A-Wish at Gulf Tower.)

Offspring histories

2007: 0 chicks out of 2 eggs

2008: no nesting. Bridge under construction throughout the breeding season.

2009: no nesting.

2010: no nesting. Mary Cleo (Dori) left the bridge for the Gulf Tower in March 2010.