

History of peregrine falcon nests in or near Pittsburgh, PA:

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

Caution: Readers of this document will note that much of the information on offspring concerns mortality. This is a function of the marking technique we use. Bands on birds’ legs are a great, non-invasive way to study birds. However, they are nearly impossible to see at a distance. For this reason, band recoveries almost always happen when a bird is recaptured or when it dies. That explains the somewhat grisly content of this document!

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

Background

Peregrines were first noticed downtown in winter 1989 - 1990. To provide a breeding site for these birds, in 1991 nest boxes were installed by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) at the Gulf Tower. One was put on the south side of the building, the other on the north side. The birds bred in a nest box the first year they were put up. Over time both nest boxes were used, although it appeared that the peregrines initially preferred the north box facing Allegheny River. Because the north box was used more frequently, the south box was removed when it started to deteriorate.

Breeding Pairs

1989 – 1997: Boris and Natasha

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

1998:-2003: Boris & Tasha 2

Arrival of Tasha2: New un-banded female observed at the nest in 1998 season. Tasha 2 was banded that spring when her chicks were banded. Because she was un-banded when she arrived, we have no knowledge of her history.

2003-present: Louie & Tasha2

Arrival of Louie: Birds of prey fight for territorial domination and, as sometimes happens, in 2003 Boris was displaced (and dispatched) by a younger rival in a territorial fight. In March Tasha 2 had laid a few eggs when a rival female showed up. 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 another male showed up and they fought. Boris apparently lost the fight and on April 11, 2003 his beheaded body was found on the nest box gravel, visible in the camera.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) collected Boris' body, and eventually pulled the eggs from the nest box. Later that year two peregrines courted at the site and the female laid 4 eggs. When the dust cleared we discovered the pair of peregrines was Tasha 2 and Louie. Louie is one of the offspring of the original pair of falcons (Dorothy and Erie, see below) that bred at the University of Pittsburgh Cathedral of Learning in 2002.

Between 2003 and 2007 Louie and Tasha 2 raised 20 young falcons.

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 (information from the Midwest Peregrine Society - MPS).
- 1992: 3 Chicks
(female, 1992 - ?) - WPC has a phone message from Dan Brauning (PGC) 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 (MPS). Primaries damaged, became an educational bird at Detroit Zoo as of 1999 or 2000.
(male, 1993-1993): Died 10 Aug 1993
- 1994: 2 Chicks
- 1995: 4 Chicks
(male, 1995-1995) - Broke wing fledging, died 7/95
- 1996: 3 Chicks
(male, 1996 - ?) - Paired in Elyria, OH in 1997, no nest
- 1997: 1 Chick
- 1998: 4 Chicks
(female, 1998 - ?) - Nested at Bohn Building, Cleveland OH in 1999
- 1999: 4 Chicks
SW (female, 1999 - present) - nested at LTV Steel w/ brother *W/C (from 2000) in 2001. In 2002 began nesting at Cleveland’s Terminal Tower with a male named “Buckeye”. Lays earlier than other peregrines, just like her mother. Nest is always successful.
(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) - Dead at Eastlake Power, Cleveland OH, Oct 2002. MPS 2001: nested at LTV Steel in Cleveland w/ sister in 2001.
- 2001: 4 Chicks
(female, 2001 - ?) - Observed in Toronto in June 2002? Nesting at Niagara Falls in 2003, produced 2 young. Photos with positive ID from 2003, no positive ID since then.
- 2002: 4 Chicks
(male, 2002-2004) - Bird tracked with satellite telemetry. Found dead in Pittsburgh’s Strip District in Feb 2004, apparently due to severe impact trauma. Telemetry data showed that the bird had been in NJ and vicinity of NYC.
(male, 2002 - present) - Nests at Lakeview Generating Station in Mississauga, ON. In 2005, fledged 3 young.
(female, 2002) - Bird tracked with satellite telemetry. Last report before the telemetry unit battery failed was from south Philadelphia, 2003.
- 2003: 4 Chicks
Pittstop (female, 2003) - Injured July 2003, not releasable. Currently at the Medina Raptor Center in Ohio.
(female, 2003) – Another bird tracked by satellite telemetry, the last report from this bird came from Cleveland in November 2003.
- 2004: 4 Chicks
(female, 2004) – Injured in October 2004, not releasable. Currently at Zoo America in Hershey, PA.

2005: 5 Eggs, 3 Chicks

Bo (male, 2005) – In spring 2007 began nesting at the 62nd Street Bridge near Etna, in Pittsburgh.

2006: 5 Chicks

2007: 4 Chicks

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

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

Background

In the 1990s the National Aviary, together with the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the University of Pittsburgh established a falcon nest box on the Cathedral of Learning. The box was never used and subsequently removed. Subsequently a peregrine chick thought to have fledged in Oakland was injured, rehabilitated and released near the Cathedral and adult peregrines were reported off and on in Oakland in 1998-2000. In January 2001 Kate St. John noticed a pair of peregrines in a courtship flight and engaged in other behaviors consistent with nesting. Although no nest was found, the University of Pittsburgh agreed to allow installation of another nest box and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) agreed to create and monitor that box as well. The nest box was installed in February 2002 and first used in that year.

Breeding Pairs

2002 (or possibly earlier) – present: Erie & Dorothy

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

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

Between 2002 and 2007 this pair has raised 22 young. On 11 March 2007 Erie fought and killed Pulse, an invading male hatched in Cleveland in 2004.

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: 4 Eggs, 3 Chicks

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

(female, 2005 - ?) - Seen in West Mifflin, PA on 09 August 2006, on a picnic table. Didn't care for the lunch being served and so flew away.

2006: 4 Eggs, 3 Chicks

2007: 4 Chicks

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

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

Monaca bridge:

Background

Scott Gregg first noticed a pair of peregrines at the bridge in spring 2007. A nest was found and the condition of the nest site suggested that falcons may have been breeding there for several years.

Breeding Pairs

2007- present: unbanded male & Kelly

male: unbanded, no additional data.

Kelly (female, 2003 - present) - Born 2003 at 125 S.Wacker St, Chicago, IL.

Arrival probably before 2007, first noticed in 2007. Two chicks produced in 2007.

Offspring histories

2007: 2 chicks.

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

62nd Street bridge:

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 to weather. To improve chances of breeding success at this site, the PA Game Commission installed a nest box January 2008.

Breeding Pairs

2007- present: Bo & Shenandoah

Bo (male, 2005 – present) – Hatched in 2005 at the Gulf Tower, to Louie and Tasha 2.

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

Offspring histories

2007: 0 chicks