



CONSERVE WILDLIFE  
FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY

## 2009 Nestbox News

**July 1** - As you probably have noticed, we are having technical difficulties with the videocamera. Biologists visited the rooftop of 101 Hudson Street on Friday, June 26th to try and resolve the issues but were unsuccessful. We hope to have the video up and running soon but in the meantime, visit <http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/peregrinecam/jcp-still.htm> to see images of the nestbox, both inside and outside. The images are refreshed every 3 minutes.

The chicks are growing and are losing their down feathers and growing in their flight feathers. They are moving quite a bit both inside and outside the box. The adults are still delivering food to the chicks. When biologists were on the rooftop to try and fix the camera, they witnessed the adult land with a catch and the chicks chased after it, providing them with exercise as well as reinforcing their hunting instinct.

**June 17** - On Friday, June 12th, the peregrine chicks were visited by Mick and Kathy, biologists with the NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Program. Mick and Kathy were there to band the chicks and give them a check-up.

There are 3 chicks – two females and one male. The females are about 1/3 larger than their brother and this size difference is often evident on camera.

An examination showed all three young to be very healthy. Kathy and Mick attached the numbered federal band on their right leg, and a bicolor (black over green) band on their left leg. Their color band numbers are A/11 and A/12 for the females, and 72/W for the male.

The parents remained extremely protective of their young, and Kathy and Mick were lucky to depart unharmed. As the nestlings approach 4-5 weeks of age no one will approach the nest area to make sure the young birds take their time as they become ready to take their first flight.

While at 101 Hudson, and while the nestlings were safely inside in a covered box and resting, the camera was moved so that it looks directly into the nest box. While it does not provide an up-close view of the chicks as before, history tells us that as the chicks grow they become more mobile and hop outside the box. This outside view also allows us to view the adults as they perch atop or next to the box.

Biologists also left a small ramp at the nest box, because as the chicks approach 4 weeks of age, they get restless and jump out of the box; without the ramp they cannot reenter the box easily.

**June 3** - On May 28th, Endangered and Nongame Species Program biologists Kathy and Mick visited the nestbox to give the chicks their first check up. The 3 chicks were removed from the nest and brought inside the building. They were examined and given some medication to help ward off a disease very common to young urban peregrines, Trichomoniasis (a pigeon-borne disease that can kill young peregrines). One of the chicks had mild symptoms of the disease, so the medicine will help the chick to easily overcome it. Otherwise, the chicks are all doing well.

The adults were both present during the visit - the female put up a great defense, flying closely over the biologists head. The male, or tiercel, perched atop the wall directly over the nest box where he stood his ground. His black and green color band reads \*2/\*6, so he is the same male that's been there since 2006. He originated from the Riverside Church, just across the river in New York City, in 2003, so he's six years old this year. The female wears only a silver federal band that we have not been able to read, so we don't know her origin. They are very protective parents, known for their ferocity in protecting their nest site!

If all goes well, Kathy and Mick won't be visiting the nest again until mid-June. At this time, the chicks will be banded with a green and black color band (similar to the male) to signify that they are NJ birds from this Jersey City nest box.

**May 28** - The chicks have hatched! Hatching began on Friday, May 22nd and ended with the hatching of the third egg on Saturday, May 23rd. (Congratulations to Mrs. Tobin's Class of Centre City School in Mantua Township for guessing the correct hatch date!)

This morning I witnessed an adult (most likely the female) bring in some food and proceed to tear it up and feed it to the chicks. The male does most of the hunting and then delivers the food to the female. Peregrines eat other birds and in Jersey City their diet consists mostly of pigeons, with the occasional starling or songbird. Feedings are frequent but brief, since the small chicks cannot eat much at a single feeding. At other times, the three eyases are usually huddled together to keep warm. This morning also brought the chicks' first checkup. At approximately 9:45, biologists with the NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Program took the chicks and briefly examined them to make sure they were all healthy. We will post the results of this checkup when we receive word from Kathy Clark, the head biologist with the Peregrine Project.

We welcome the new peregrine family. Keep watching - now is when it starts to get exciting!

**May 14** - When you tune into the peregrinecam, most times you find an incubating adult. They are patient parents looking after the eggs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We,

peregrinecam watchers, must remain patient, we WILL be rewarded soon hatching should begin in a week or so.

If you are lucky enough to see the eggs, you will notice that one egg is lighter in color than the others. This was the first egg that was laid. It is a little unusual, and sometimes the eggs that look different (lighter color, a slightly longer shape) do not hatch. Eggs 2, 3 and 4 are normal in size, shape, and color.

**April 30** - The adult peregrines are now busy incubating 4 eggs. We believe that the last egg was laid on Monday, April 20th. Incubation will last about 32 days.

The hours and days spent incubating the eggs seem endless, but this period is vital for the survival of the eggs. The peregrines must maintain the eggs at a temperature of approximately 96 degrees, allowing proper development of the embryos inside. You may notice that they turn the eggs a couple time of day to evenly incubate the eggs (and make sure that the contents do not stick to the sides of the eggshell). During the incubation period, the eggs are not left alone; on a warm day we may catch a glimpse of the eggs for a minute or two, but those breaks are few and far between and an adult usually returns quickly to continue caring for the eggs.

Some background about the adults using the nestbox: In 2000, staff at the NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) were contacted by the building manager at 101 Hudson Street in Jersey City. The building manager had seen peregrines around the building and upon contacting ENSP, biologists installed a nestbox on the top of the building to entice the falcons into nesting on the building. It worked like a charm and these beautiful raptors immediately began "playing house" in the structure. They courted, laid eggs, and raised chicks that year and peregrines have used the nestbox every year since then.

In 2001, the webcam was installed and viewers across New Jersey, the United States, and even across the globe can now witness this pair of peregrines as they raise a family. Identification of the peregrines can be done by attempting to read their leg bands. Most peregrine falcon chicks in New Jersey are banded with bi-color leg bands the year that they hatch. If these birds are re-sighted at some point during their lifespan, it provides us with information about their migration and survival.

We have not been able to confirm if this seasons falcon pair is the same pair as last year. We believe it to be the same but confirmation can not be confirmed unless we are able to read their leg bands. In 2008, we were able to confirm that it was the same female and same male as in previous years. The female has been using the nest since 2000 and the male has been her mate since 2005. We do not know the whereabouts of the female - she only has a silver US Fish & Wildlife band that is difficult to read. The male is banded with a bicolor band with the numbers 2/6 that tells us that he was originally banded in 2003 at the Riverside Church in Manhattan.

Take a guess: What day will the eggs hatch?

TEACHERS! Send your classes guess to [maria.grace@conservewildlifenj.org](mailto:maria.grace@conservewildlifenj.org). Correct guesses will be entered into a drawing to win a sticker and postcard for each student and education materials for the teacher. Send your guess by May 15th to be sure your guess is recorded.

**April 16** - Finally, after weeks of waiting, the female peregrine has begun laying eggs. In 2008, incubation began around March 29th so the birds are almost 3 weeks behind last year's schedule. We do not know why they are so late to start. One possibility is that there has been a mate change in the pair. Peregrines tend to mate for life, but if one bird is injured or dies, the remaining bird will find a new mate. When that happens, the pair spends more time courting and building their pair-bond, and nesting may be delayed.

The first egg was laid on Monday, April 13th and she will lay a new egg every 2 days or so until there is a full clutch of three or four eggs. Peregrines are synchronous hatchers, which simply means that all the eggs hatch at about the same time. Because of this, peregrines do not start to incubate until the last or penultimate egg is laid. But you may notice the adults brooding the eggs closely when it is cool outside and they may stand near the eggs when it's warm out.

We here at Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ are excited that the nesting season has begun and we look forward to sharing the lives of these endangered species with you.

**March 16** - Welcome back to another year of Days of the Peregrine! LIVE Video is now streaming - this is the earliest that the camera has ever been activated, providing us with a rare opportunity to witness the activities leading up to egg laying and incubation.

Recently, biologists with the NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Program installed a new nestbox at 101 Hudson Street. They reoriented it to provide better protection from the elements and they also installed 2 new perches, one above the roof and one just outside of the opening. While biologists were at 101 Hudson Street, they observed the female falcon perching at the box entrance and perform some scraping inside the box.

Tune in often as we watch the lives of this peregrine falcon family unfold. We promise it will be an adventure!