



2020 Puget Sound Peregrine Falcon Project: Annual Report

This season was particularly dismal for Peregrine Falcons in Seattle (four nests). The flagship downtown skyscraper nest at 1201 3rd Ave was unoccupied for only the second time in 27 years. Wright Runstad & Co, who has supported our project since 1994, replaced both the *1201 falcon cam* and the nest box this year. We hope for new residents in 2021.



Banded Tacoma nestling (URC)

Few realize the support that the city's bridge-nesting Peregrines receive from city and state agencies. Last winter Urban Raptor Conservancy (URC) worked with Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) and Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to exclude a determined pair of Peregrines (male 17-AD and an unbanded female)

from their death-trap nest site on University Bridge. Thanks to Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), we added fresh gravel to the nest box on the I-5 Ship Canal Bridge (installed ca. 2000 by Falcon Research Group) to entice the 2020 pair to nest there. Instead, they chose a site on the 520 bridge over Portage Bay—which failed. We appreciate the near-daily monitoring of this pair by Jenn Kovach from the water and Mary Anne Thorbeck from land.

The unbanded adult pair at the East Channel Bridge surprised us by nesting somewhere on a center pier. A 3-week-old chick was seen, but it disappeared well before it could have fledged.

The West Seattle Bridge pair, seemingly indifferent to the emergency closure of the bridge in March, fledged three young. One died on West Marginal Way upon fledging. A second fledged but couldn't get airborne. She was rehabbed at PAWS Wildlife Center and successfully reunited with her family, but then was seen only once with her unbanded sister before disappearing (but see table).

In contrast to Seattle, Tacoma's Peregrines (three nests) had a typical year: at 3 months post-fledging, five of 11 fledglings had died (50% mortality at this age is typical). The downtown Heritage Bank nest fledged four;



Refurbished I-5 Ship Canal nest box (URC)



Jeremiah Holt grabs his first wayward fledgling Peregrine (URC)



Angry Tacoma mom awaits the return of her young, who were briefly kidnapped for banding (Brian Favorite)

Patti Loesche and Ed Deal banded the young. Credit is due to Brian Favorite for setting up a webcam and for multiple rescues of grounded juveniles and releases back to the roof. For a while it seemed miraculous that we avoided post-fledging mortality here—and alas, we didn't (see table). The resident adult male (08-N) was banded as a nestling in 2004 on the 11th St Bridge in Tacoma. Yes, he's 16 years old, now the oldest wild bird we've had in our study area.



PAWS-rehabbed juvenile reunited with her sibling in West Seattle (Jeremiah Holt)

Eight banded Peregrines were re-sighted between November 2019 and October 2020: four juveniles, who died, and four second-year and adult Peregrines, who survive. The journey to adulthood is a perilous one.

Date	Age, Sex, Band	History	Fate
Nov 2019	Juv M 34-AD	One of 3 intensively guarded, rescued, rehabbed, and released fledglings from University Bridge in summer 2019.	Found dead from window hit in Seattle near Green Lake PCC.
Jan 2020	Adult F 74-U	Banded at 1201 3rd Ave, Seattle, in 2013 by Ed Deal and Susan Burchardt.	Photographed in downtown Portland. Where has she been all these years?
May 2020	Adult M 00-AD	Roger, Fergus, & Martin followed up on WSDOT report of a banded male nesting on Agate Pass Bridge, between Bainbridge Island and Kitsap Peninsula.	Banded by Martin in 2017 in downtown Tacoma. A most happy reunion.
Aug 2020	Juv F 68-AK	One of 4 fledglings banded in May at downtown Tacoma nest.	Found badly injured at Green Lake, Seattle; euthanized.
Aug 2020	Juv-F 54-AK	Rescued at her West Seattle nest site, rehabbed, banded, and released in June 2020.	Found dead from window hit in downtown Vancouver, BC.
Sep 2020	2nd-yr M 40-AD	Rescued at his West Seattle nest site, rehabbed, banded, and released in June 2019	Found badly injured in Seattle; euthanized.
Sep 2020	2nd-yr M 43-AD	Trapped inside glassed courtyard of Seattle VA and hitting windows. Barehand rescue by Ed and Patti. Captured in Feb 2020 at SeaTac airport, while Ed and Martin led a Seattle Audubon Peregrine field trip. Field trip detoured to airport to band the bird.	Treated for minor injuries at PAWS and released.
Oct 2020	Juv F 67-AK	Another fledgling banded in May in downtown Tacoma. Retrieved by Jeff Brown, PAWS naturalist, from the Boeing Everett hangar.	Extremely emaciated; euthanized.

Two Tacoma nests on elevated freeways had mixed successes. NV fledged four but lost one to frounce (avian trichomoniasis), despite a valiant relay from Tacoma north to Lynnwood to deliver her to PAWS. The resident adult male here (A-79) is from the West Seattle nest, class of 2015 (interesting symmetry: recall that the resident West Seattle male was banded in Tacoma in 2016). 509 produced three nestlings, but the only verified fledgling was road-killed. Reputable Tacoma falconers Roger Orness and Fergus Hyke photographed an adult pair in June on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge but found no young.



Female 74-U in Portland, Oregon—first sighting since 2013 (Jon Rutter)

URC was contacted by and consulted gratis with Boeing regarding their unique problem of indoor-nesting Peregrines in the vast Renton 737 assembly hangar. In hopes of luring them out of their indoor nest, Boeing asked us to provide two nest boxes. We agreed on \$600 for time and materials, and URC's Martin Muller built them. Once we delivered the nest boxes, Boeing stopped communicating – and stiffed us. This saga was well documented by Richard Read in the LA Times. We were touched that a supporter who read this article sent us a donation



Late evening sunlight touches Peregrine feathers (Fergus Hyke)

to compensate us when Boeing did not. To our surprise, Patti later discovered the nest boxes on the hangar roof. In June, WDFW took four nestlings from the indoor eyrie and placed them with falconers. The fate of those birds, including whether they were rewilded, is unknown.



Ed with 43-AD right after rescue from glassed courtyard (URC)

Urban Peregrines are a handful! Let's close out the season on an uplifting note with *Nick Dunlop's award-winning video, Starling-Falcon Dance* (3 min).

Our work with Peregrines would not be possible without PAWS Wildlife Center, WSDOT, SDOT, Wright Runstad & Co., and our many public stewards, friends, and supporters. Here's to next year.

Urban Raptor Conservancy

<https://urbanraptorconservancy.org/>

info@urbanraptorconservancy.org