

## Hawk and Owl Trust Urban Peregrine Project

### Norwich Cathedral

### March 2014 – Update 3

Well that's what you might call a Whirlwind Week for the Hawk and Owl Trust's peregrine team for Norwich Cathedral. It started peacefully enough, albeit with the residual tension of a possible re-visit by the intruding falcon from the week before. Then, taking us a bit by surprise, our resident female laid her first egg of the season at 15:04 on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> – some 3 days earlier than last year. This was accompanied by much euphoria in our camp, very quickly followed by the realisation that what seemed to be a sizable chunk of the rest of the world was doing the same thing and clamouring for information. The team sprang into action in a blur of tweets, Facebook posts, phone calls, YouTube video clips, SMS messages, webcam images and emails, all trying to feed the insatiable mass with the facts they craved.

Any thoughts that interest in the Norwich Cathedral Peregrines might have ebbed over the winter were instantly dispelled. Quite the contrary in fact. Our faithful following public are if anything more enthusiastic than ever. Its grown into quite a global community now and set to grow further if the response to Twitter and Facebook are anything to go by. Our posts to Facebook alone this week have reached almost 100,000. It is really satisfying for the team to see that so many people are truly interested in watching the 'story of life' unfold for this pair of wild peregrine falcons and playing their part in the complex interweave of the natural world.



The male (left) gets 'That Look' from his mate

Meanwhile, amidst all this human kerfuffle the peregrines just got on with it. Tending the egg and making sure it didn't get too warm or too cold. Right from the start the little male quickly showed that he was a 'new man' and keen to play his part in rearing his offspring. Too keen for the female on occasions as she would make it clear with 'that look' if this didn't meet with her approval. Being about one third smaller than the female he has little choice but to concede, although he does try to tough it out now and again. He never wins though.

A tad over 57 hours later, just as we were starting to get some semblance of order restored in the office, the second egg arrived. Once again there was little drama from the female and once again the little male showed great interest in the new arrival. He clearly has a strong parental instinct and a close bond with his female who by now was allowing him to guard the egg when she needed to stretch her wings for a while.

Then on Sunday, almost 60 hours to the minute since the second egg was laid, the third egg arrived. The now common ritual of the male coming to the nest shortly afterwards to inspect the new arrival was repeated. If all goes to plan the fourth egg, if there is to be one, should be with us around midday Tuesdays. Four eggs are typical for peregrines but not guaranteed. Three may be it this year – or, very rarely, it might be five.

Hawk and Owl Trust Urban Peregrines Project at Norwich Cathedral.

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At this stage the eggs are not being fully incubated by the adults so it is common to see them left completely uncovered for quite a while. This is quite normal for peregrines as they will not start full incubation until around the time that the third egg is laid. Until then the parent birds will ensure that the eggs are kept warm enough to remain viable. This strategy ensures that the eggs hatch at closer intervals than they were laid. Last year the first 3 eggs hatched within 19 hours.

The adult may not be in the nest at times but be assured that they are not far away. Probably sitting on a 'crocket' – the little protrusions that adorn the spire – watching out for marauding black backed gulls looking for opportunities to steal an egg or, later, a chick. It's a risk of life that all animals in the natural world have to cope with, even apex predators like the peregrine falcon. Being the fastest bird in the world doesn't provide any benefit in this regard.

Remember, live streaming video from the nestcam is on the Hawk and Owl Trust web site [www.upp.hawkandowl.org/live](http://www.upp.hawkandowl.org/live). Up-to-the-minute updates are posted on our Facebook pages at [www.facebook.com/HawkandOwlTrust](http://www.facebook.com/HawkandOwlTrust) and tweeted by @hawkandowluk. Enjoy.

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Hawk and Owl Trust