

Working for wild Birds of Prey and their Habitats

Press release

Hawk and Owl Trust Urban Peregrine Project Norwich Cathedral March 2014 – Update

The recent warm weather has been very different to last year when, you may recall, some parts of the country were experiencing significant snowfall while here in East Anglia we



were in the blast of a cold easterly wind for weeks on end. Not so this year. There is a definite Spring-like feel in the air so it will be no surprise that the Norwich Cathedral Peregrines are well into their pre-nesting season rituals. Two nest 'scrapes', clearly visible in the image left, have already been made by them in the gravel of their nest box some 80metres up the spire of the Cathedral. The female will choose one when she lays the first egg.

The pair have also been visiting the nest box more frequently, calling loudly to

one another while the male 'swaggers' at the female. They have also been seen mating, even on camera, and the male has been bringing his mate prey offerings, demonstrating to her that he is both willing and able to provide for her and any chicks that might come along.

However, it's not been all plain sailing for the pair. At this time of year other peregrines that have not found a nest site and partner search for them in earnest. Desirable nesting sites are in short supply. Those that have staked their claim on one have to vigorously defend it against those that are still searching, as happened to the Norwich pair last year, and it has

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happened again in 2014. Our little male gallantly tried to defend his nest against a determined intruding female (image above). After much hollering and aerial tussling she was finally repelled by the resident pair. This life-in-the-wild event was caught on camera (<http://youtu.be/WphCJSBTsRo>).

When we examined the footage afterwards it was noticed that the intruder had an orange/red ring with the code 'DP' on her left leg. Much excitement followed as we realised that it would be possible to find out not only where this bird had originated from but also how old she was. This investigative work has been carried by our friends at the British Trust for Ornithology in Thetford who have informed us that the intruder bird was from London and about three years old.

Clearly the bond between our pair is very strong and the laying of the first egg is expected any day now as last year it was laid on March 21. There are indications that it might be earlier this year but no-one really knows for sure. There is still a lot to learn about life-in-the-wild of these spectacular birds.

One thing we do know is that we, the Hawk and Owl Trust, need to be ready when it does happen, particularly as this year we are doing even more things to bring these charismatic birds to the wider public. We have put out an appeal to ask for more volunteers to help out at our Cathedral Watch Point. We had well over 30,000 visitors last year and expect even more in 2014, so more helping hands are always welcome.

The Hawk and Owl Trust Urban Peregrine Watch Point will start on **Tuesday 1 April**. We are thrilled that locally based company Viking Optical have once again generously agreed to help sponsor the event and provide us with telescopes which we can use to show visitors the peregrine falcons 'close up and personal'. There are even small 'scopes for the kids!

The Hawk and Owl Trust's Peregrine Project Officer Carrie Kerry says:

'We are really delighted with the number of people that have volunteered to help us man the Cathedral Watch Point this season. It will only be a few days now and the whole cycle of life for our family of peregrines will start again. Do come down to the WatchPoint and see us!'

We will of course be streaming live video images 24/7 from the web cams on the nest to the Hawk and Owl Trust web site at www.upp.hawkandowl.org/live/. These live images will also be on show at the Watch Point via our specially installed wifi link to the nest cam.

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Finally, we are excited to tell you that this year we have partnered with **Norwich Castle Museum** and will shortly be showing video clips and live images straight from the Cathedral nest cameras on a large screen in the Castle Rotunda. This will feature as part of their 'Wonder of Birds' exhibition, which starts in May and runs through to the end of September. See www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk for more information. The Cathedral is only a short stroll from the Castle so visitors can easily visit both sites. Our thanks to all at the Cathedral and the Castle, and particularly FreeClix/WiSpire who have helped get the wireless link set up between these two historic buildings enabling us to stream the images.

You can also 'Like' our FaceBook page if you want to be kept up to date with what's going on with the Cathedral peregrine family and see the latest video clips. We also regularly 'Tweet' the action using *@hawkandowluk* and *#nrperegrines*.

Better still, why not pop down to the Cathedral Watch Point where our team can give you the latest information and you can see the birds live. Our Peregrine Watch Point Officers, Carrie, Nick and Jan are back with us for another season – and would be delighted to see you. More than that, the sight and sounds of peregrines screaming overhead is a wonderful experience. Bring the kids as it's a great opportunity to get them close to nature - and to see the fastest bird on earth!

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