

## National Aviary News

Contact: Laura Ellis, National Aviary, 412.559.3519  
Dr. Todd Katzner, National Aviary, 412.323.7235, x210



**NATIONAL AVIARY**  
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### Pittsburgh FalconCam Goes Live as First Egg Appears Thursday, 12 March 2009

(PITTSBURGH, March 15, 2009) – Peregrine falcon nesting season is again upon us, and streaming video cameras installed at the top of the Cathedral of Learning on the University of Pittsburgh campus and on the 37<sup>th</sup> floor of the Gulf Tower in downtown Pittsburgh have gone live, capturing the sight of a first egg laid Thursday, March 12 at 2:30PM at the Gulf Tower, and a second one spotted on Sunday morning. More eggs are expected soon at both sites (and may even be present when this press release hits inboxes).

The cameras, which operate 24 hours a day, provide nature lovers and researchers an intimate look at the life of peregrine falcons and their young. A project of the National Aviary's Department of Conservation and Field Research in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh and the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the streaming video of peregrine nesting pairs in both locations can be accessed online at [www.aviary.org](http://www.aviary.org).

“After observing the male and female falcons actively defending their nest sites and engaging in courtship behavior these past few weeks, we were thrilled to see the first eggs on Thursday,” says Dr. Todd Katzner, director of conservation and field research at the National Aviary. “The birds – who we believe to be Louie and Tasha 2 at the Gulf Tower, and E2 and Dorothy at Pitt – are being closely followed not only by researchers, but by peregrine falcon lovers around the world who log on daily to watch the progress of the incubation and chick rearing.”

Streaming video feeds at the Cathedral of Learning debuted last year, but this year marks the first time that live footage of the Gulf Tower will be available. Support from Kate St. John (<http://www.wqed.org/birdblog>) together with other local peregrine fans and EarthCam (<http://www.earthcam.com/>) made this additional live footage possible. In previous years, the Gulf Tower nest was represented by still images updated every 15 seconds.

"The ability to watch peregrine falcons continuously as they proceed through the nesting cycle adds greatly to the public's ability to learn more about this remarkable species and to scientists' ability to study them," says Katzner. "As a scientist I'm excited about the opportunities this provides for giving us the detailed knowledge required to really study the biology of this important species," adds Katzner. "The biology of peregrine falcons in wild settings is well understood; however, despite the fact that they have

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adapted well to urban environments and an increasing human population, there is less known about how they live in the concrete jungle.”

If the chicks hatch successfully, they will be banded by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and given a full medical exam by a veterinarian sometime in May or June.

Peregrine falcons were once one of the most widespread birds in the world, but the use of long-lived pesticides such as DDT caused females to produce thin eggshells that often cracked during incubation. By the 1960s, populations crashed throughout much of the world, and in 1974, peregrines were listed as Endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. After a nation-wide recovery program enabled the species to make a comeback, the peregrine falcon was federally de-listed in 1999.

The peregrine falcon continues to be listed as a Pennsylvania Endangered species under the state wildlife code because their populations have not fully recovered here. The Pennsylvania Game Commission is the official regulatory and management agency for peregrines in the Commonwealth and an important collaborator in the National Aviary's efforts to increase local peregrine falcon populations and educate the public about this remarkable bird.

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*The urban peregrine falcon recovery project is a project of the National Aviary conducted in partnership with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, University of Pittsburgh, Cathedral of Learning, Gulf Tower, the Make-a-Wish Foundation, Robert Pierce and Associates, and numerous private citizens who have lent their support.*

*The National Aviary works to inspire respect for nature through an appreciation of birds.*

The National Aviary is America's only independent indoor nonprofit zoo dedicated exclusively to birds. Located in West Park on Pittsburgh's historic North Side, the National Aviary's diverse collection comprises 600 birds representing more than 200 species from around the world, many of them threatened or endangered in the wild. The National Aviary's large walk-through exhibits create an intimate, up-close interaction between visitors and free-flying birds, including opportunities to hand-feed and to meet many species rarely found in zoos anywhere else in the world.

As an environmental organization composed of educators, conservationists and researchers, the National Aviary's goals are many. The Aviary aims to provide high quality education programming for varied audiences; provide the highest quality family recreational experience that a zoological institution can offer; save endangered species by preserving natural habitats; continue endangered bird breeding programs and conduct meaningful avian research; engender a sincere appreciation of nature and a respect for natural law; and instill a conservation ethic that teaches our immense responsibility as stewards of the planet. More information at [www.aviary.org](http://www.aviary.org) or by calling 412.323.7235.