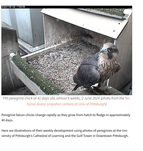
Peregrine Chicks Week-to-Week Development



Two peregrine chicks at 16 days old, week 2, June 2015 photo from the National Aviary Falconcam at Univ of Pittsburgh

Peregrine falcon chicks change rapidly as they grow from hatch to fledge in approximately 45 days.

Here are illustrations of their development using photos of peregrines at the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning and the Duff Tower in Downtown Pittsburgh.

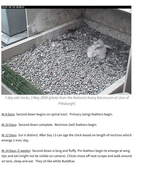
At Hatchlings: 3-10 grams, feeble, damp, pink, sparse down, eyes closed except when they gring open eyes to ride the

First hatching at Duff Tower, 2011 (photo from the National Aviary Falconcam)

At 1 Week: Weights has doubled since hatch but, sits up, open eye is round. No second down yet.

At 2 Days: Second down begins on wings (humeral and alar ticks, dorsal surface of wing).

At 3 Days (1 week): Second down begins on abdomen and legs (femoral and crural tracts), chicks form a huddle in the nest scrape, can sit up but still wobbly. Sleep in a pile.



3 day old chicks, 2 day old chicks photo from the National Aviary Falconcam at Univ of Pittsburgh

At 9 Days: Second down begins on spinal tract, Primary (wing) feathers begin.

At 10 Days: Second down complete. Rectrices (tail) feathers begin.

At 13 Days: Eye is distinct. After this 5 to 7 days chicks will have an length of rectrices which emerge (mess) day.

At 14 Days (2 weeks): Second down is lying well fluffy. Pin feathers begin to emerge at wing tips and tail (might not be visible on camera). Chicks move off nest scrape and walk around on tarsi, sleep and eat. They sit like white Buddhas.

14 day old chicks, 16 May 2009 (photo from the National Aviary Falconcam at Univ of Pittsburgh)

At 15 Days: Silk sprigs(?) alert. All primaries emerged from sheaths.

At 18 Days: Heavy down. Contour feathers visible on wing edges. Gets a "face."

At 20 Days (3 weeks): If camera is zoomed out because chicks are very active, Feathers now define the face, feather tips quite noticeable on wings and tail. Chicks very active on great surface. Often sleep individually instead of in a pile.

21 day old chicks, 17 May 2009 (photo from the National Aviary Falconcam at Univ of Pittsburgh)

At 25 Days: Begins to stand and walk on feet, still mess on tarsi. Body contour and back feathers visible.

At 27 Days: Regularly walks on feet rather than tarsi.

At 28 Days (4 weeks): Body feathers give the chicks a spicily look that camouflages them on the nest. They beg loudly. Wings look longer and fuller as wing feathers grow. Chicks spend most of their time on nest scrape but will the next surface yet. In the wild, young chicks feathers will grow rapidly, pushing out the down which they will pick off as they preen.

28 day old chicks, 24 May 2009 (photo from the National Aviary Falconcam at Univ of Pittsburgh)

At 30 days: Half down, half feathers. Face is pronounced.

At 35 Days (5 weeks): Chicks are brown and cream colored with some down patches on wings, on top of head and on "pantaloons" legs. The youngest chick is obvious because it has more down. 3rd primary and secondary feathers still blood noodled and growing. Chicks are very active, walking, jumping, flapping, and "flying" in the nest scrape. They do not return to the nest at night. Parents pull out of much abuse the nest. Chicks beg loud ly and snack incoming food from parents. In the coming week they will fly from ledges that cannot be seen on camera.

35 day old chicks, Wedge walking and flapping, 21 May 2009 (photo from the National Aviary Falconcam at Univ of Pittsburgh)

35 day old chicks begging, 31 May 2009 (photo from the National Aviary Falconcam at Univ of Pittsburgh)

At 39-45 Days: Fully feathered except for bits of fluff on top of head and under wings. Pens grow chicks make their first flights, approximately day 45. The oldest movies fledge first, then the females and youngest. Youngest chick is alone on the nest or the others walk away. After they fly, they are permanently off camera. Fledgling now perch on other ledges and other buildings.

38 days, youngest chick alone as the others walk away (photo from the National Aviary Falconcam at Univ of Pittsburgh)

Peregrine fledglings at Univ of Pittsburgh 25th floor ledge, 8 June 2015, 45 days old (photo by Anthony Thomas)

The young pay with their parents for part of the summer while they learn to hunt. Before the end of summer they leave forever.

(photos from the National Aviary falconcams at Univ of Pittsburgh and the Duff Tower, and by Anabelle Thomas)

14 thoughts on "Peregrine Chicks Week-to-Week Development"

Mirin Harper
October 12, 2014 at 12:32 am

Hi Kate,

I was delighted to find your blog with informative description of chick development and marvellous photos (particularly fledgling sitting wobbly on the ledge) in Melbourne Australia I have been following via webcams (I live in Sydney) the Collins falcons. It's been a bloodbath in heaven.

http://www.365toilethelms.com.au

Cheers,

Mirin

Reply

Kevin O'Rafferty
October 12, 2014 at 2:14 pm

Pls too…watching them right now…

Kev in Melbourne

Mirin Harper
October 12, 2014 at 7:19 pm

Hi Kev,

It's been fantastic seeing the chicks grow & starting to perch and nibble at bits of carcass with seemingly inappropriate enormous claws for such little birds. Yesterday I saw a pair of Australian Magpies (not in the nest) but exploiting a constant regular source of food. Some of the prey seem bigger than pigeons!

Cheers,

Mirin

Kevin O'Rafferty
November 12, 2014 at 12:12 pm

30 days old today…they should be flying within a week, I'm watching them more often in the hope of seeing one of them take off. Taking more screenshots, too.

Kev

Reply

Mirin Harper
November 12, 2014 at 7:47 pm

Hi Kev,

30 days and one tone chick – adult left it with a carcass at about 5pm and flew of again – haven't seen the other two chicks for a while – nearly time to take flight. I'll miss them when they go.

Mirin

Reply

Madeline
May 11, 2015 at 6:00 am

I have them on my window and they seem to grow very fast ?

Reply

Pete Jaques
June 12, 2015 at 1:36 am

Thanks for this terrific outline replete with visual aids! I'm fascinated by it.

Reply

Nanette Derby
October 3, 2015 at 12:50 am

Bumpus for your amazing blog!

Reply

Jerrold Olson
May 7, 2016 at 3:05 am

Hi Mirin,

Your description of falcon development is really interesting especially as I watch the weekcam of ladies in the Mayo Clinic falcon nest. The gaping for food is fun to watch as they hone on pigeon names. I am certain the fledgling while the adults are away is for planning their next play. The designated wide nuisance falcon will fly down the sidelines of the nesting box.

Go to "Mayo Clinic falcon" for a another really interesting site for falcon information.

Jerry

Reply

Joel
May 25, 2016 at 7:14 am

Have thoroughly enjoyed these pics of peregrine development. This month I've been watching the development since hatching of the peregrine chicks on the top of the Superman building in Providence, RI and am amazed at how exactly they've followed progression of the pics you've posted.

Reply

Richard
June 7, 2016 at 4:46 am

Great blog! Will the chicks ever get heavier than adult weight?

Reply

Kate St. John
June 7, 2016 at 5:20 pm

I have read they are temporarily heavier before they get to the fledgeling stage. When they fly they are back to normal adult weight.

Jeffery Gibbs
January 12, 2017 at 12:12 pm

What a wonderful page. I learned so much. I came looking because I reread the book "My Side of the Mountain" (read it when I was in 7th grade now 66). And then went on to read the rest of the series. #Frightful

Reply

Rory
March 8, 2018 at 4:43 pm

I have been using this guide for a few years to work out when the chicks in St Albans will reach certain milestones! One of the best resources on them out there, thank you.

Reply

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