FALCONWATCH 2026

Summary Report

For the Executives and Members of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club

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INTRODUCTION

The breeding population of Peregrine Falcon (Falco peregrinus) had entirely disappeared from Ontario by the mid-1960s. Bioaccumulation of the pesticide DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) was found to be the culprit, causing widespread reproductive failure and leading to a Canada-wide DDT ban by 1969.

In addition to the ban, a national reintroduction program was begun. Hacking of Peregrine Falcons involves obtaining chicks bred in captivity when they are a few weeks old and raising them with minimal human contact until they are ready to fledge and be released into suitable habitat. Between 1977 and 2006, approximately 600 Peregrine Falcons were released in Ontario through projects managed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR), the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and various naturalist organizations and corporations. In the Ontario Peregrine Falcon Recovery Strategy, section 1.3, https://www.ontario.ca/page/peregrine-falcon-recovery-strategy, a province wide Peregrine Falcon survey conducted in 2010 confirmed 119 nesting territories in Ontario. On 30 November 2011 the Peregrine Falcon status on the Species at Risk in Ontario list was changed from "Endangered" to "Special Concern", meaning they are no longer endangered or threatened but may become endangered or threatened due to a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats. (https://www.ontario.ca/page/peregrine-falcon).

Although DDT use was banned in Canada and the United States in the 1970s, "We should be alert to the possibility of other chemical risks emerging ….. such as flame retardants, and we would do well to heed the lesson that the 1960s threat to the Peregrine was discovered largely by accident" (Patrick Stirling-Aird, *Peregrine Falcon*, 2012, Firefly Books). As of April 2017, DDT is still being made in North Korea, India, and China and used in various "third world" countries. In addition to environmental contamination, the Peregrine continues to face risks [https://www.ontario.ca/page/peregrinefalcon-evaluation] due to human disturbance, habitat change or loss and erratic weather effects.

Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*, the book which was most responsible for bringing the dangers of DDT to light, wrote, "Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at which we say "Our work is finished." The Hamilton Falconwatch community has played, and will continue to play, an important and vital role in helping the Peregrine Falcon. From 1995 to 2025, 78 chicks have fledged from the Sheraton Hamilton nest. In that time Falconwatch volunteers carried out a total of 35 successful rescues of downed chicks. For the complete history of the adults and chicks from the Hamilton nesting site, visit [http://falcons.hamiltonnature.org] and click on the "History" Button/tab at top right.

AN OVERVIEW OF FALCONWATCH 2026

Falconwatch 2026 represents the 32nd consecutive year that Peregrine Falcons have nested on one of the upper window ledges of the Sheraton Hotel in Hamilton. The breeding pair, Judson (male) and McKeever (female), produced 4 eggs. McKeever laid the first egg on March 23rd with single eggs following on March 24th, 26th and 29th. This year the first egg hatched at 7:30 pm on April 30th, and the following 3 all hatched on May 1st. On the 19th of May the four chicks were brought out of the nest by trained climbers and banded for identification. A silver band given to each Falcon has a unique identification number given by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. A different coloured tape is given to each chick for identification of individual birds at a distance. They also received their unique Canadian bands. Each chick was named at the banding: Dalewood (M-yellow tape), Corktown (F-red tape), Vincent (M-blue tape) and Saltfleet (F-white tape). The sex of the chicks was identified by the weight at banding. The chicks quickly became more active and began to jump up on the nest ledge starting with Corktown on the 27th of May. All four were spotted, as they were last year, on the ledge on June 2nd.

Again, this year, Judson did most of the hunting while McKeever would stay at the nest and transfer food from Judson to the chicks whenever it was delivered. The chicks were well fed as evidenced by their individual weight at banding and they grew quickly.

Early on June 10th, as Falconwatchers arrived, it was apparent that Dalewood had left the nest overnight but was quickly located on the east side of the Standard Life roof. Late in the morning of June 10th, Vincent took flight, also landing on the Standard Life building where he joined Dalewood. As the sun set that night, Dalewood took flight towards the Sheraton but appeared to hit a building. He was soon rescued by a Go Bus driver, a bystander and Animal Services. June 11th Dalewood made his first trip to the Owl Foundation and was deemed fit to return the next morning but just as he was to be released one of our CORE rescuers saw that he seemed to be limping so back to the Owl Foundation he went. On June 13th Saltfleet and Corktown both fledged as the sun was rising with Corktown landing on the northwest corner of Standard Life and Saltfleet flying further afield to 10 Bay - the McMaster Student residence.

Three rescues were needed during the watch with all three requiring trips to the Owl Foundation. Dalewood was rescued twice and returned to Owl Foundation after second rescue where it was deemed that he had a broken pelvis and would be at the Owl Foundation until July 8th when he was released with a number of volunteers watching him. Corktown was at the Owl Foundation from the 15th-19th of June and quickly caught up with his siblings in flight and some early hunting skills. Sadly we received a message from Tracy at the Canadian Peregrine Foundation that Dalewood was found July 13th in a farmer's field SW of London. He was taken to Salthaven Rehabilitation Centre near Strathroy, Ontario emaciated and dehydrated. He passed the following day, July 14th. An initial necropsy identified him as a female. A more detailed necropsy will follow.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Falconwatch are to:

- Observe and track the daily habits of the chicks while they are young, ensuring their safety and preparing for a rescue if one is needed.
- Monitor the growth and development of the peregrine falcon chicks, taking field notes to track important milestones such as helicoptering, first flights, learning how to hunt and so on.
- Inform and educate the public on the goals and importance of the falcon watch, the statistics and history of the peregrine falcons in the area, as well as how to get involved and help the falcon watch organization.
- Provide updates on the peregrine falcon adults and chicks by completing final reports at the end of the day as well as sending updates to social media for the public and volunteers to watch.

The objectives of the Falconwatch final report are to:

- Summarize the events of the 2026 falcon watch as well as provide an understanding of the overall duties and responsibilities of the falcon watch every year. A copy is sent to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (NDMNRF) and the Hamilton Naturalists' Club.
- Provide a permanent record of the highlights of the 2026 falcon watch including information about the banding of the chicks as well as their growth and development.

METHODOLOGY

Preparations for Falconwatch 2026

i. Rescue Team Training

A team of experienced volunteers was once again in place to help in the event of a Peregrine Falcon chick rescue. The members of the rescue team were on call to perform rescues during hours (6:00 AM to 9:00 AM) when a Coordinator was not on site. They also covered lunch and dinner breaks. Those who were available also acted as back-up for the Coordinators during the hours when they were on site (9:00 AM to 9:00 PM). On May 27th, 2026 the Coordinators, Lead Monitors and rescue team members took part in a training session at the Mountsberg Conservation Area's Douglas G. Cockburn Centre for Birds of Prey. The training was conducted by Sandra Davey, Coordinator, Animal Care and Programs (Conservation Halton) and former Falconwatch Coordinator. During the session the team was shown how to safely and effectively capture and restrain a grounded Peregrine. Portions of the OMNDMNRF protocol for dealing with a downed Peregrine were also reviewed.

ii. Contact with other Organizations

Prior to the start of the watch season, Lead Monitors Pat Baker and Leah Schwenger contacted the property and/or security managers of the following: Hamilton Sheraton Hotel, McMaster David Braley Health Sciences Centre, 100 King Street West (Stelco Tower, Real Properties), Ellen Fairclough Building, Standard Life Building, Core Entertainment (FirstOntario Centre, FirstOntario Concert Hall), Art Gallery of Hamilton, Bank of Montreal (BMO). The managers were given contact numbers for Lead Monitors and the Coordinators and watch information. The phone numbers for the person to contact in each building is on the pocket card the Lead Monitors, Coordinators and rescue team carry**,** and in the volunteer manual binder. Security at Stelco Tower had a list with names of those permitted to access the 20th floor. New this year the Falconwatch Co-ordinators and rescue team members have access to both the 10th floor terrace and 30th floor sky lounge of the 10 Bay McMaster University Residence when accompanied by Falconwatcher Avery Periana or an approved person.

iii. Volunteer recruitment

Volunteers who participated in previous Falconwatch seasons were contacted by a Lead Monitor and asked to participate in this year's watch. Calls for volunteers went out on the Hamilton Falconwatch website, Facebook and Instagram pages. This season many dedicated long-term volunteers and new volunteers joined the watch team and were an asset to the season's watch.

iv. Volunteer orientation

The volunteer orientation was held on May 25th, 2026 at the Braley Health Sciences Centre. There were 58 attendees at the orientation including the Falconwatch members who gave the presentation. The purpose of the session was to inform volunteers of their duties and to review procedures and use of equipment. Lead Monitor, Pat Baker, presented on the history of Hamilton Falconwatch. This year's Coordinators, **Matthew Mills** and **Lisa Millar,** were announced and introduced. Mary Anne McDougall explained the sign-up procedures for Time to Sign Up (timetosignup.com/falconwatch2025/).

Emails sent to volunteers@falcons.hamiltonnature.org are handled by Lead Monitor Leah Schwenger, and any volunteer experiencing difficulties with Time to Sign Up was redirected to Mary Anne McDougall. Parking options were explained. Volunteers were then given a chance to get answers to their questions.

v. Scheduling

The Coordinators were on watch from **May 30th** to **June 27th, 2026.** The volunteer Falconwatch was conducted from **May 30th** to **June 27th, 2026.** Volunteers were present to monitor the birds' activities from 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM (in two-hour shifts from 9:00 AM on). The Coordinators were present daily from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM. Volunteers were able to sign up for as many or as few shifts as they liked. The Coordinators had access to volunteer schedules each day through Time to Sign Up. At times throughout the season there were gaps in the volunteer schedule which were sometimes filled in response to a request for volunteers posted to the Hamilton Falconwatch Facebook and Instagram page as well as the Falconwatch website. Volunteers often offered to stay past their scheduled shifts to help fill gaps. Volunteers were urged to contact one of the Coordinators or the Lead Monitors if they were unable to attend a shift on short notice.

Watch Stations

i. ***McMaster University David Braley Health Sciences Centre ("Home Base")***

The north side of the David Braley building was considered home base during Falconwatch. Our main resources for the watch such as rescue boxes, the field notes and more were kept in Room 2005 on the second floor. The parking lot has a fantastic view of most of the areas the Falcon adults and chicks go. The Stelco tower, the Sheraton building and nest, BDC building, Homewood Suites and many smaller buildings could be seen from this area. This year we also watched from the SW corner of the building when the chicks were using the Bentley Place building on Caroline St. We also crossed Bay St. directly west of the David Braley Parking lot to watch the west side of the Standard Life building. Radios and chargers were kept at the Sheraton Hotel.

ii. ***King Street near Summers Lane***

This location was used often and is very close to the Sheraton. If one of the chicks were to fall out of the nest we would be able to see exactly where it landed as well as be able to get to the chick quickly and easily. It was an extremely important place to have a rescue trained person positioned when the chicks were active. *For safety reasons volunteers are reminded to stay off King Street and to watch from the south side of the street near the walls.*

iii. ***Stelco Tower (20th floor)***

Stelco Tower was used as a lookout point mainly after the chicks had fledged. From the 20th floor you can see most of the roofs and spots that are otherwise not visible by camera or by volunteers on the ground. This was valuable to use if a chick went missing or went out of sight during a flight.

iv. ***Hamilton City Hall***

The Hamilton City Hall was a great location to view most of the buildings nearby and provided a slightly more south perspective which allowed volunteers to view different angles of the buildings than the other locations. This was a great resource to use to monitor BDC where adults and chicks were frequently seen.

v. ***Art Gallery of Hamilton, upper level***

The Art Gallery outer platform was a second location to view the Sheraton nest as well as both the BDC building and City Hall. It is close enough to King Street for another person to come and help a rescue.

vi. ***Jackson Square Plaza***

The Jackson Square Plaza played an important role once the chicks fledged as it gave us a northern viewpoint of the buildings which couldn't be seen from other locations. This was important to have to monitor falcon locations and locate birds when they went out of sight from other spots. This year the chicks frequently were spotted pancaked on the ledges of the north and east faces of the Stelco Tower during hot weather. At times they were very difficult to detect from below and required careful searching from various vantage points on the Jackson Square Plaza.

vii. ***10 Bay - McMaster Residence***

The 10 Bay - McMaster Residence became a new and important partner when they agreed to allow the Falconwatch Committee access to both the 10th floor terrace and 30th floor sky lounge when accompanied by Falconwatch member Avery Periana, who organized this opportunity or when accompanied by an approved member. The building manager was kind enough to approve the plan. Both adults and chicks were also spotted at various perches on this building and other temporarily missing birds were easily spotted from the 30th floor.

Data Collection

Data sheets containing daily field notes were kept in a binder and used by the coordinators and volunteers to record daily observations of the Peregrines' activities and times of occurrence. Activities recorded included rescues, feedings, flights by the fledglings, hunting attempts, interactions with other species and interactions between the Peregrine chicks and adults. Events which indicated the development of the chicks were also noted and any unusual behaviour was emphasized. If time did not permit recording behaviours as they were happening an effort was made to record the event afterwards. For example, if two birds were in the air at once and the coordinator and/or volunteer was needed to keep track of the birds, notes could be made once they stopped flying. The volunteer who was at 'home base' at the David Braley building was responsible for recording the notes from calls which came in through the radio. The data recorder was asked to record observations without including any personal bias or opinion. If a particularly significant event happened the coordinator would make a point of asking the data recorder to note the event. The coordinators summarized each day's events in daily reports which were posted online and can be found on the Hamilton Community Peregrine Project (HCPP) website: http://falcons.hamiltonnature.org.

Rescue Procedures

A minimum of four rescue boxes were kept at the David Braley building. The rescue boxes were small cardboard veterinarian type animal carriers which contained cut resistant gloves, a rolled-up towel, and folded towels. If a rescue was required all needed supplies were easily transported to the rescue site. When we had a volunteer onsite at least one rescue box was kept at home base whilst the others were kept with volunteers stationed throughout downtown. During watch hours, when a volunteer was onsite and if a bird required rescuing, the volunteer was to maintain contact via two-way radio with the coordinator on duty and to follow their instructions. Only members of the rescue team were to perform rescues and do so according to the procedure which was explained during the rescue training. When a bird was in a precarious situation the volunteer and coordinator would communicate by two-way radio if the bird flew or changed positions. Volunteers, except the Rescue Team members, were not to touch a fallen bird unless necessary to remove it from imminent danger. However, they were to try to shield the bird from danger until the coordinator arrived on the scene to perform a rescue. Two boxes were kept overnight at Sheraton so that they could be accessed by the volunteer who was on at 6:00 AM; they contained the equipment required to start the morning's watch. Three rescues were required in the 2026 season and details are provided in the section, 'A Brief Bio of the 2026 Peregrine Falcon Chicks'.

Equipment

A bin kept at home base contained the transponders, swipe card, binoculars, volunteer manual, safety vests and both human and bird first aid kits. Two marked permits for the David Braley parking lot were provided for Falconwatch. The swipe card used by the coordinator allowed 24-hour access to the David Braley Centre. Two additional swipe cards were kept by lead monitors. There were several extra binoculars available for the volunteers to use, a help for newer volunteers who often did not have binoculars of their own. The volunteer manual contained all of the important information for volunteers, many copies of a map of downtown Hamilton, two parking permits for the BMO parking lot and one for City Hall. At the end of each day the equipment required to begin the next morning's watch was put into a single rescue box and stored at the Sheraton Hotel along with the second rescue box. The rest of the equipment remained in a secure room (2005) at the David Braley Health Sciences Centre.

A set of two-way radios allowed for instant communications to call out the positions of falcons so that all of the members of the watch could hear, including webmaster Charles Gregory. Six radios were rented from Jannatec Technologies along with two extra battery packs and eight charging ports in total. It was critical to keep radios well charged. In the past these were charged and stored in our room at the David Braley Health Sciences Centre but a new policy cut power to the room in the evening and on the weekends. This year the Sheraton Hotel was kind enough to provide space for the Falconwatch chargers and radios. Charles Gregory, webmaster, also had a charger and radio.

The watch started in May this year and it was discovered that we did not have access to our equipment in the Braley building during the first two days of the watch, especially as it was a weekend. In the future if we begin in May, arrangements will be made to ensure access.

Partners

The success of the Hamilton Community Peregrine Project (HCPP) this year and every year is in large part due to our many local partners. This year the project was supported by:

Sheraton Hamilton Hotel: nest ledge, video camera and webcam computer location, banding facilities, rescue box overnight storage, radios and radio charging
McMaster University, David Braley Health Sciences Centre Room 2005: primary Falconwatch site, volunteer training facility, storage for Falconwatch items, access to building during watch hours, parking
Hamilton Naturalists' Club (HNC): project management, volunteers, coordinators, video cameras
Real Properties Ltd.: access to the 20th floor of Stelco building as needed to check roof tops for chicks
Worldline: high speed internet access
Fibernetics Business Service: HCPP web server and internet access
Jannatec Technologies: two-way radios
Hamilton Video and Sound: technical expertise
Hanwha Vision: HD video camera #2
The Owl Foundation: peregrine falcon expertise and care
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF): Ontario Government authority overseeing all matters relating to Peregrine Falcons
Conservation Halton (Mountsberg Raptor Centre): Peregrine Falcon expertise, rescue training
Canadian Peregrine Foundation: care and protection of falcons

FoCPF: Friends Of Canadian Peregrine Foundation: supply of bands and banding assistance
8Trees Inc.: banding, expertise
BMO: volunteer parking
Aquanova Brewery/Bird Friendly Hamilton Burlington: beer, donations
McMaster University Residences: access to the 10th floor terrace and the 30th floor at 10 Bay St.
Salthaven Wildlife and Rehabilitation and Education Centre: Assistance with Dalewood

Media Coverage

HCPP Video Cameras and Internet Website

The Falconwatch video cameras were once again extremely valuable tools. They are used to monitor the activity of adults and chicks and give us the capability to read leg bands. With the new video camera donated by Hanwha Vision in 2024, paired with our old pan-tilt-zoom camera, we are now able to closely observe two different locations at a distance which improves our ability to keep track of chicks and adults as they fly from one rooftop to another around the downtown core. This helps us maintain situational awareness even when all the birds are not within sight of watchers on the ground.

The HCPP website (http://falcons.hamiltonnature.org) displays and stores an archive of images uploaded live, year-round. The site is also used to post information about falcons and news updates on their activities such as laying, hatching, feedings and fledgings. During nesting season the site sees more than 1500 visitors per day with some of them watching the birds for hours. We've had over 225,000 visits in total since March 2025. On-street Falconwatch volunteers make use of the website images on their phones in order to help them keep track of birds in or near the nest but out of sight from street level.

Social Media

There is a Facebook group which is maintained and run by the HCPP called “Hamilton Falconwatch” (www.facebook.com/groups/hamiltonfalconwatch/).

This year the group grew by over 2700 members, reaching almost 8000. About two thirds of our membership is from Hamilton and Burlington, with most of the rest being from other regions of Ontario and Canada. A couple of hundred members follow us from locations as far away as Europe and Australia.

The typical news report got about 4000 views. Some news posts, like hatching and banding, got up to 40,000 views which means they received significant attention from outside our group. Members of the group watch our website throughout the day and some will upload any interesting images that our cameras capture, often before the webmaster has had a chance to review the website archive and select/post recent photos. The group also serves as a resource for our community to ask informal

questions and get answers on topics like peregrine biology and behaviour. The group, together with the website, provides a valuable resource for recruiting volunteers and seeking donations.

The Instagram account (@hamiltonfalconwatch on the Instagram app or from a web browser at https://www.instagram.com/hamiltonfalconwatch/?hl=en) had 767 followers at the end of the watch – a significant increase from last year. The best webcam photos are posted to the account. There did not appear to be any new photos from this year. It would be a good idea to choose someone to monitor and maintain the site to give it value.

Commercial Media Coverage

I. Hamilton Spectator, Laura Sebben, 23.03.26 online and in print 25.03.26
"First falcon egg arrives at downtown Sheraton perch" https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/hamilton-sheraton-falcon-egg/article_07f200da-62bc-5d4f-a945-751c9cc99825.html

ii. CHCH News, News Staff, 24.03.26
"Hamilton's Peregrine Falcons lay first eggs of the 2026 nesting season"
https://www.chch.com/chch-news/hamilton-peregrine-falcon-lays-first-egg-of-the-2026-nesting-season/

iii. CBC Hamilton, Desmond Brown, 25.03.26
"Falcon watchers gear up for 2026 nesting season as Hamilton peregrine lays eggs"
https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/peregrines-eggs-falconwatch-9.7140502

Iv. Hamilton Spectator Letter to the Editor 26.04.26
"Add 'Falcons' name to the lineup"
AI description of letter: *A reader suggested naming the new Hamilton AHL team the "Hamilton Falcons" to honor the city's downtown peregrine falcon population. The proposal seeks to connect the team's identity to local ecology, according to a letter in The Hamilton Spectator.*
https://kommodo.ai/i/cMj7AzpsWDTIJ5yNm9RZ

v. North End Breezes, Mary Anne McDougall, 28.04.26
"Peregrine Falcons Return to Downtown Nest" https://northendbreezes.com/peregrine-falcons-return-to-downtown-nest/

vi. ***Wood Duck, Mary Anne McDougall, May 2026 edition, Page 211***
"Peregrine Nest Fidelity" https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:191c871e-2014-4a10-8768-41bbdd12915f

vii. CHCH News, Bridget Laur, 01.05.26
"Three baby peregrine falcons hatch in downtown Hamilton overnight"
https://www.chch.com/chch-news/three-baby-peregrine-falcons-hatch-in-downtown-hamilton-overnight/

viii CBC Hamilton, Justin Chandler, 02.05.26 -
"3 peregrine falcon chicks hatch in downtown Hamilton nest"
https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/falconwatch-eggs-hatch-2026-9.7184716

ix. Hamilton Spectator, Cathie Coward, 20.05.26
"Four falcons on the ledge of the Sheraton"
https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/morning-news-traffic-weather-report/article_f0560c87-cbe2-5008-b6ce-5f3f430ecdd7.html
"This One's For the Birds" https://thespec.pressreader.com/article/281505052863509
Note: Same article but different title between hard copy and online editions.

x. CHCH News, News Staff, 21.05.26
"Four baby falcons banded, named after Hamilton neighbourhoods"
https://www.chch.com/chch-news/four-baby-falcons-banded-named-after-hamilton-neighbourhoods/

xi Hamilton Spectator, 180 years feature, 15.07.26
Photo of Madame X dive bombing a climber on banding day.
https://kommodo.ai/i/UZfPsvsDHjQbVIP5Mnye

Xii. *Wood Duck, Mary Anne McDougall, September 2026 edition, Page 20*
"Survival is Challenging for Fledgling Peregrine Falcons"
https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:3f6d1718-c6b2-42f4-ac5e-75c4597f36aa

Related Events

1. Clean Air Day - June 3rd - Hamilton Central Library - Judy, Jager, Pat, Leah - table at the event to promote Falconwatch
2. Green Venture - April 1st - Youth Stewardship & Professional Skills Programme - Judy, Jager, Pat, Leah - spoke to their youth volunteers about Falconwatch - from this presentation the students designed a handout for our use.
3. Adult Day Programme VON - July 24th -Judy and Leah gave a casual talk to the staff and people attending the day programme about Falconwatch.
4. YMCA Newcomer Youth Programme - June 30th - visited Pat and Leah at base. They explained what Falconwatch entailed and then did a walk-about searching for the birds and showing them our viewing spots.

A BRIEF BIO OF THE 2026 PEREGRINE FALCON CHICKS

Four chicks were successfully banded on the 24th of May. Due to their size and weight it was determined that there were two males and two female chicks.

Dalewood (male) was given a yellow band with the ID X/49. His USFW band number is 1156-32371. He weighed in at 570 grams and was 19 days old. Identified as female after her death.

Corktown (female) was given a red band with the ID *E/I. Her USFW band number is 1947-35193. She weighed in at 730 grams and was 19 days old.

Vincent (male) was given a blue band with the ID X/47. His USFW band number is 1156-32370. He weighed in at 605 grams and was 19 days old.

Saltfleet (female) was given a white band with the ID *P/I. Her USFW band number is 1947-35194. She weighed in at 760 grams and was 19 days old.

There were three rescues over the course of the watch and three required medical evaluations at the Owl Foundation in Vineland, ON. The rescue details include:

RESCUE #1: DALEWOOD- On June 10th as the last volunteers were leaving Dalewood was seen taking flight from the Standard Life Building towards the Sheraton where he disappeared from sight. The Co-ordinator and volunteers looked in the air and on the ground but did not see him and left the area as it was dark but hoping for the best. Shortly, a call was made to the Falconwatch webmaster from Animal Services. A Go Bus driver had seen Dalewood on King St. and stopped his bus while a good samaritan picked Dalewood up off the road. Animal Services retrieved him and he was taken to the Owl Foundation the next morning, June 11th. After checking him out they deemed him ready for release that morning on the top of the Sheraton.

RESCUE #2: DALEWOOD: On the morning of June 11th they released Dalewood from the box as planned but just before he took off our CORE rescue person decided that he did not seem ready as he was observed to be limping so he was re-captured and taken back to the Owl Foundation. X-rays were taken and he appeared to have a broken pelvis on the right side. This took a number of weeks to heal. When he had been cleared for flight on July 8th a number of volunteers came down to observe him as the official watch was over. Sadly we later received news from Tracy Simpson from the Canadian Peregrine Foundation that Dalewood was deceased. He had been found on the roadside near an agricultural field southwest of London and brought to the Salthaven Rehabilitation Centre, Strathroy on July 13th. At first he appeared to respond well to some nourishment and fluids but, having arrived emaciated and dehydrated, he unfortunately succumbed to his condition the next day. It is not apparent why he left the territory so soon after release but it did not appear to involve parental rejection.

RESCUE #3: CORKTOWN- On June 15th, Corktown came to ground after flying unsteadily to several buildings when she was caught by a Falconwatcher on Bay Street, all the while being observed and called at by a parent. She spent the night at a CORE volunteer's home and then was taken to the Owl Foundation in the morning. Corktown had recovered from her aches and mild injuries and was released on the 19th. She flew out of the box so fast that the cameras could not see her and she quickly caught up with her siblings to continue flight practice and to learn some early hunting skills.

WATCH HIGHLIGHTS

March: Eggs laid on March 23rd, 24th, 26th, and 29th.
April 29th: First egg hatched.
May 1st: Final three eggs hatched.
May 19th: Banding, weighing, sexing, naming, ID numbers.
May 28th: the first day of Falconwatch watch begins. Volunteers and Coordinators arrive to monitor and track each of the birds and their daily habits and growth.
June 3rd: All four chicks hopped up on the ledge to eat. They would be on the ledge frequently each day after this.
June 6th: As a storm approach all four chicks were very active on the ledge flapping energetically. They hung out on the ledge through the rain.
June 7th-9th: Chicks very active, helicoptering, a sign that their first flights will happen very soon.
June 10th: Dalewood made the first flight of the year at 6:18 am, from the Sheraton nest ledge to the Standard Life Building. Later that morning Vincent also made a successful first flight to the Standard Life Building at 11:12 am. That evening Dalewood made an unsuccessful second flight and was rescued from the street (detailed in rescues above). Spent overnight with Animal Services.
June 11th: Dalewood taken to Owl Foundation, returned to be released, but returned to Owl Foundation with an apparent injury.
June 13th: Both Saltfleet (5:25 am) and Corktown (5:28 am) fly. Corktown flew around to the north side of the downtown core and settled on a very low corner rooftop on the NW of the Standard Life Building. Saltfleet settled on the roof of the parking garage on 10 Bay.
June 14th: Corktown was rescued near the Starbucks restaurant on York Blvd.
June 26th: Final day of the watch. Adults put on a scintillating display with a prey drop mid-air over the Braley lot as the watch concluded.
July 8th: The release of Dalewood after nearly a month at the Owl Foundation.

COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS YEARS

This was the fifth consecutive year with Judson and McKeever as parents at the Sheraton. In both 2022 and 2023 four healthy chicks fledged. In 2024 four eggs were laid, 3 hatched and one chick perished of unknown causes in the nest scrape. Two chicks successfully fledged. In 2025 four chicks fledged, with Lawfield needing extended care before his eventual release.

Unlike in 2025 when all 4 eggs hatched on the same day, one of the eggs hatched a day early in 2026. This year three of the four chicks fledged successfully while the fourth, Dalewood, required an extended stay at The Owl Foundation before being released back into the wild. The watch began on May 30th, a few days earlier than in 2025. Watchers continued to anticipate potentially higher winds downtown caused by continued development of tall buildings around the watch area. The exact pattern and influence of these winds will change year-over-year while new development continues. The watch concluded on Friday, June 26th, after 28 days. There were three rescues required, down from an all-time high of 5 in 2025.

Media coverage in commercial publications was less this year. Fortunate this year was the lack of excessive heat during the watch and calls for volunteers were generally met with a good turnout. In 2023 and 2025 the start of the watch began with very shaky first flights from the Peregrine chicks. In 2024 with only two chicks fledging successfully they were observed completing strong, long flights over downtown and even catching their own prey by the end of a shortened Falconwatch. This year the chicks favoured the Standard Life and BDC buildings, but spent a considerable amount of time atop the Fairclough and Pigott buildings, especially compared to recent years. The Stelco Tower was used more and more as the chicks developed their flying skills. Other buildings favoured by the chicks were the McMaster residence building at 10 Bay and the Regency. A new favorite this year was the Scarfone-Hawkins Building on James Street S just one block south of King St. Adults and fledglings would often sit together on the antennae of this building as June progressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In previous seasons we gleaned recommendations from volunteers throughout the watch and listed them in this section. In 2026 we will be distilling a list of recommendations from the following survey.

2026 FALCONWATCH VOLUNTEER SURVEY

A survey of volunteers was conducted in order to gather feedback on what we are doing right and where we can improve. Respondents were also asked for suggestions as to what we can do to increase our visibility, donations and media support both traditional and online. 81 people out of a possible 182 responded to the 19 question survey which is 44.5% - an excellent result where traditionally 30% is high. The feedback was mostly positive with many great suggestions that deserve to be explored.

A 20 page summary is currently being studied by the Falconwatch Committee and can be made available to HNC. Next steps include choosing what can be implemented from the results and creating timelines for execution.

CONCLUSION

Falconwatch 2026 was largely a success: three of the four falcon chicks fledged successfully , our volunteers experienced a safe and enjoyable watch and public outreach was once again widespread, and our relationship with building management downtown expanded to include the McMaster Residence at 10 Bay. Unfortunately media representation was minimal.

The demise of Dalewood cast a sombre shadow on the end of the watch. Staff and volunteers invest tremendous efforts each year into the successful fledgling of the chicks. This loss, after a miraculous rescue and successful rehab, is disheartening. While we understand that survival is tenuous for immature Peregrine Falcons and that tragic losses occur we collectively mourn the loss of Dalewood.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals and organizations contribute to the success of Falconwatch each year. While we can't possibly acknowledge all, some of the key players are listed below:

Hamilton Naturalists' Club for project management, volunteers, coordinators, and video cameras.

Colin Watson (General manager), Ryan Iverson (Maintenance Manager), and the staff at the Sheraton Hotel for providing roof access for banding and releases, storing our rescue boxes overnight, and for allowing us to store and charge our radios onsite.

Jennifer Atkinson, Samantha Hillgartner and the David Braley Health Sciences Centre staff and security for their ongoing support, storage facility and a room for the volunteer orientation.

The Owl Foundation for medical care for rescued falcons each year.

Allison Drennan (Real Properties) and Stelco Tower security for overseeing our access to the 20th floor.

Our volunteers, returning and new, who give so much of their time to ensure the safety of our chicks.

Pat Baker, our Lead Monitor, for her organizational skills, commitment to the Falconwatch, and for her relationship with the businesses that assist us.

Charles Gregory, our webmaster, for his dedication to both the Falconwatch Facebook page and the website, and for consistently extending invitations to volunteers and donations.

Leah Schwenger for communicating with volunteers and monitoring e-mails that came in through the website and helping to organize volunteer events.

Mary Anne McDougall for organizing TimeToSignUp, the online sign in for our volunteers to cover shifts.

Sandra Davey, Coordinator, Animal Care and Programs, Conservation Halton. For training our rescue team at Mountsberg Raptor Centre again this year.

Hamilton Public Library for streaming the website on the Big Screen at the Central library and for posting Falconwatch information to their Facebook and Instagram pages.

Paul Riss for the t-shirt designs and StartFamous for producing the t-shirts.

Judy Bailey, for bringing Jäger, her peregrine falcon to the volunteer picnic at Bayfront Park.