

Rick T

What sort of area would peregrines cover to catch their prey? Is there any chance of me seeing one on woodlands or farmland near Hilton?

Rather unlikely Rick since the cathedral birds mainly fly north, east and south to hunt for some unknown reason...and Hilton is SW on the city. Maybe they find a really good range of habitats and potential prey in the area they are used to and don't need to investigate areas which involve flying right over the city itself.

Sarah Wheatley

Have the falcons in Derby aided a lot of knowledge/research of the species?

Yes I think we can say they have. We have collected prey items and discovered over 53 different species the birds have caught AND that they sue the floodlighting to hunt night-flying prey such as woodcock and water rails. The web cams have given us more insight into the intimate lives of these birds during the breeding season especially.

Will they use the platform all year round or leave once they have reared their young? Yes, the parents stay close to the cathedral right through the year. Otherwise another pair might try to take over the nest platform. The young gradually drift way from Derby at the end of summer and will fend for themselves somewhere else....maybe using another church tower or a pylon as a roosting place. Only when they are mature will they start to look for a new, untenanted nesting place somewhere else.

Roger Lawson

Do we know how many of the Derby bred peregrines are still out there? How many are breeding?

No we don't. the survival rate for chicks post fledging is probably no higher than 1 or 2 out of 4. The early months on their own are difficult and many will not survive/find enough food/success in avoiding collisions with buildings/wires etc. WE know one female was nesting in N Yorkshire a few years ago and others have nested on churches in Nottingham etc. but the majority of the birds that have fledged we know nothing about. We do fear that some will have moved onto the moors where they are in great danger of being persecuted by the grouse shooting industry's game keepers.

Joanne Church

If one of the chicks is small, say there are 3 chicks, do the parents practise cannibalism like tawny or barn owls? No, never. This is because there is always enough food to go round. Owls that depend on small mammals have a different problem – their prey cycles every four years or so from being plentiful to being scarce...so the owls can't feed all their chicks in poor vole/mouse years and that's when cannibalism occurs.

Do peregrines mate for life or are they solitary creatures? They usually mate for life or until one of the pair dies or is killed. Then they will quickly find a new mate. Our pair will stay together through winter until next February when courtship will resume again...so you can see them on the cathedral or Jurys Inn almost any day in the winter.

Why is it that Goshawk and sparrow hawk numbers are increasing and the peregrine and hobby numbers are struggling? Goshawk numbers are stable but only AWAY from the moors where grouse shooting occurs and where they are still persecuted. Sparrow hawks are common and widespread but there have been signs of a small decrease recently and no one knows why yet. Hobbies have increased greatly across the UK in the last 30-40 years. Again we are not sure why, perhaps as a result of climate change/more dragonflies for them to feed on. Kestrels are struggling and we are not sure why.

Are numbers of peregrines declining at the moment? In the countryside there are some declines possibly due to chemical residues from things like fire retardants which they pick up from their prey. They are also still targeted by the shooting industry. Search for 'raptor persecution's website and you'll see a whole category of persecution incidents reported there...very distressing and totally illegal!

Jason

Will there be watch points this year? Sorry no there won't be any due to covid problems. Hopefully there will be next summer. If you have binoculars it is still worth going to cathedral green in the next few weeks to watch the birds.....the adults teach the young how to catch prey and that can lead to some spectacular displays of flying (and usually catching too!)>