

Duluth Budgeteer News

Peregrine falcons enjoy downtown living

Jana Peterson

Budgeteer News - 06/08/2007

When it comes time to fly, Duluth's current crop of peregrine falcon babies will test their wings over the city streets, the Lakewalk and Lake Superior.

For now, however, the babies are still in the nest. They were banded May 30, when the cover photo was taken by photographer, freelance writer and native Duluthian Michael Furtman. Furtman, a supporter of the Peregrine Watch project, documented the entire process on his Web site,

www.michaelfurtman.com.

The banding process was not without excitement, however, as the mama falcon objected quite strongly to having her babies removed from the nest, even temporarily.

It isn't only the professionals who can watch this latest falcon brood grow up.

For almost two weeks, naturalists have been hosting the Peregrine Watch on the Lakewalk off Superior Street, where they have spotting scopes and binoculars, to help them point out the movements and activities of Duluth's most visible raptor

family.

"Last year we had more than 3,600 people come through and look at the birds over a six-week period," said Julie O'Connor, naturalist/

educator on the project.

Still, many Duluthians don't know about the birds, which have resided at the Greysolon Plaza building for five seasons.

"It's great," O'Connor said. "When people find out, they feel like they've been let in on a secret. ... The best thing for me as a teacher is when people come back and tell me some fact they've researched themselves about the birds."

Last year O'Connor or other naturalists were at the Lakewalk (by the tile mosaic wall, where the walk turns from Canal Park up the shore) every day for six weeks. Funding is not secured yet for this year, so they may only be there one or two days a week on a volunteer basis.

O'Connor said watching the young ones learn how to fly is exhilarating and nerve racking. Mark your calendars, as she expects flight to occur sometime during the week of June 17.

"It's kind of like when kids learn to ride a bike," she said. "As long as they're going fast in a straight line, they're OK. It's take-offs and landings that can be precarious."

Want to Help?

Contact Julie O'Connor, naturalist, at 348-2291 or by e-mail at peregrines@hawkridge.org. Formal programming and group programs can also be scheduled at other times and locations (including evenings).