

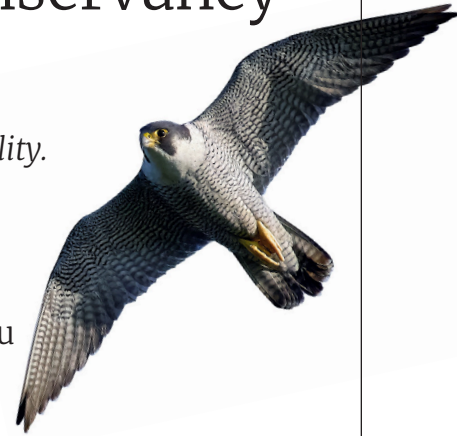


2024 Urban Raptor Conservancy Annual Report

“It’s easy to think of birding as an escape from reality. Instead, I see it as immersion in the true reality.”

– Ed Yong

As we enter our eighth field season as a non-profit, we reflect with gratitude on all of you who have joined us in “the true reality” and who continue to make our endeavor possible.



Long-Term Monitoring Studies

Our long-term studies inform us about the health and behavior of these urban populations. Our observations of urban peregrines have recently been complemented by those of the Cascades Peregrine Project, which follows wild peregrine eyries in the foothills of east King County.

Seattle Cooper’s Hawk Project. 2024 was our 21st year of studying urban nesting Cooper’s hawks. URC volunteers located 65 nest-building pairs within the city limits of Seattle, and 51 of those pairs fledged 183 young. See our *2024 Cooper’s hawk report*.

Puget Sound Peregrine Project. We followed the breeding season at seven urban sites, five in Seattle and two in Tacoma, which produced a total of 21 young. As of late November, six had died, and the other 15 are not known dead. See our *2024 peregrine report*.

Cascades Peregrine Project. 2024 was the third year that the falcon watch team monitored the four cliff sites in east King County. All four sites were occupied in 2024, but only three of the four pairs completed a successful nesting cycle, producing a total of nine fledglings.

Seattle Merlin Project. The Seattle Merlin Project identified breeding merlin pairs at 17 sites within Seattle and its surrounding suburbs. Nine of these pairs successfully fledged young.

Mount Si is one of the cliff sites monitored by the Cascades Peregrine Project (Roger Orness)

Far right: This recent merlin fledgling, perched high in a Douglas fir, was one of four from a nest in a Seattle neighborhood that has hosted merlin families since at least 2011 (Kim McCormick)



Banding Rehabilitated Raptors

We banded 99 rehabilitated hawks, eagles, owls and falcons at PAWS Wildlife Center in 2024. All rehabbed raptors receive aluminum federal bands. Five species also receive color-ID bands: bald eagles, barred owls, Cooper's hawks, peregrine falcons, and merlins. Below are some stats on our biggest customers.

Since February 2020 we have put green-black color-ID bands on 65 rehabbed bald eagles. As of early November, we've received 29 band sightings on 15 different birds, a return rate of 23%. Ten of these 15 birds were live sightings. Congratulations, PAWS!

Two bald eagle reports especially testify to the value of regional wildlife rehab facilities. First, a 1-year-old male (6-N) was released in February 2022, in Raymond, a small town in southwest Washington. In May 2024, he was photographed as a three-year-old on the northeast side of Vancouver Island, 40 miles north of Nanaimo and 195 miles from his release site. This male was photographed in transitional plumage; by now he probably has a full adult white head and will enter the breeding population in spring 2025.

Second, a fully adult male with just a federal band was released from PAWS on the Snohomish River near Cathcart, Washington in May 2019 and was found in nearby Snohomish in April 2024. Although he was found dead, successful rehabilitation returned this adult to the breeding population for four nesting seasons.

We have banded rehabbed barred owls at PAWS since 2019 and started putting blue color-ID bands on them in October 2022. PAWS receives many injured barred owls, providing an opportunity to document dispersal in individuals of this species after release. To date we have banded 112 barred owls, 64 with federal-only bands and 48 with both federal and color bands. So far, we have received four band returns for the 48 color-banded owls (8.3%) and six band returns from all 112 banded barred owls (5.4%) — predictably low return rates for a largely nocturnal species with feathered legs. All post-release sightings were near the owls' respective release sites.

Rehabbed bald eagle 6-N on Vancouver Island, 195 miles from his release site (Bruce Moffat)



Juvenile male Cooper's hawk purple B-4 (Dennis Paulson)

Banding in the Field

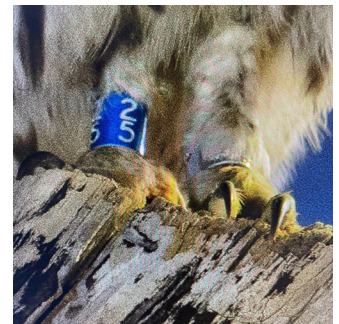
We band Cooper's hawks and peregrine falcons in the field. Cooper's hawk fledglings proved quite difficult to catch for banding this year. Of almost 200 fledglings in Seattle, our team banded 34. Over 13 years, 613 Cooper's hawks have received color-ID bands. Of these, 282 have been re-sighted (nearly 900 reports), an outstanding return rate of 46%.

We banded nine peregrine nestlings at three nest sites: West Seattle Bridge (2), AGC building on South Lake Union (3), and downtown Tacoma (4). As a result of fledglings' propensity for trouble, nine additional peregrine fledglings were banded following their rescue and rehab at PAWS.

Western Washington is extremely fortunate to have an outstanding wildlife hospital at PAWS Wildlife Center. At the beginning of the 2024 breeding season, PAWS had just moved from Lynnwood to a new and larger facility in Snohomish. This was an insanely busy time; besides the move, enclosures were still being assembled, and baby animals of many species were coming in from all over. URC's contribution to the chaos was 12 rescued fledgling peregrines who became 12 peregrine patients at PAWS. Thanks to extraordinary care during these trying times by the PAWS rehabbers, 12 healthy fledglings were released back into the wild — earning URC a peregrine frequent flier card from PAWS.



PEFA frequent flier card (Sam Sanchez)



Rehabbed barred owl from West Seattle, banded blue 2-5, was released from PAWS in December 2023 and was re-sighted nearby eight months later (Izzy Edwards)



Peregrine fledgling 23-BH at Cedar River mouth, 8 miles from his natal territory in West Seattle. Solar transmitter is on the band on his left leg.

Pilot Telemetry Study of Peregrine Fledglings

We have long wanted to track the short-distance movements of peregrine fledglings. Cellular Tracking Technologies recently developed an ultralight solar transmitter that attaches to a color-ID band. This season three fledglings were fitted with these transmitters. The unfortunate reality of high fledgling mortality left just one tagged fledgling, male 23-BH from West Seattle Bridge, to educate us on his whereabouts and the efficacy of this tag. Volunteer Tracy Slatten regularly monitored 23-BH and determined the conditions

and distance parameters of the equipment. In August, 23-BH was photographed at the Cedar River mouth, 8 miles from home, after which his transmitter was again detected back at the West Seattle Bridge.

The limiting factors in this pilot study were peregrine mortality, leaving us with just one tagged bird, and the need for one weary operator per antenna. In 2025, we hope to tag more nestling peregrines. If funding allows, we also hope to install and use a remote data-collection station.

URC in the Media — Spreading the Raptor Gospel

Consultations

- ◆ Patti and Ed consulted on two forthcoming books:
 - *Nature in the City: Seattle* by Kathryn True, revised (Mountaineers Books). Includes a section on the downtown Seattle peregrine nest.
 - A forthcoming book on anticoagulant rodenticides by Laura Keisel (Island Press, 2026).
- ◆ Ed and Patti consulted on peregrines for the exhibit, “Rare Air: Connecting with Species of Flight” including several videos of local peregrine falcon nests. (Burke Museum, through 3/31/25)
burkemuseum.org/exhibits/rare-air-connecting-species-flight

Talks

- Ed gave five talks on the Seattle Cooper’s Hawk Project in 2024. Patti is gearing up for two talks in early 2025:
- Rodenticides in raptors in western Washington (Skagit Raptor Census, Padilla Bay, 2/15/25)
 - Predictors of successful peregrine fledgling reunions (National Wildlife Rehabilitation Symposium, Seattle, 2/19/25)

Local Press

- ◆ Kim McCormick, head of the Seattle Merlin Project, was interviewed on the importance of the urban tree canopy for merlins and other wildlife.
“Seattle’s Tree Protection Ordinance: Rising above the canopy cacophony” (Seattle Times, 5/24/24)
seattletimes.com/opinion/seattles-tree-protection-ordinance-rising-above-the-canopy-cacophony/
- ◆ Patti and Ed were interviewed about the Seattle Cooper’s Hawk Project.
 - “Meet the people on a quest to count every Cooper’s Hawk in Seattle” (KUOW Soundside, 10/17/24, 8 min).
kuow.org/stories/meet-the-people-on-a-quest-to-count-every-coopers
 - “Cooper’s hawks move from the country to the city” (Seattle Channel, 10/12/24, 9 min)
seattlechannel.org/videos?videoid=x160872
Great video portrait of the Cooper’s Hawk Project!

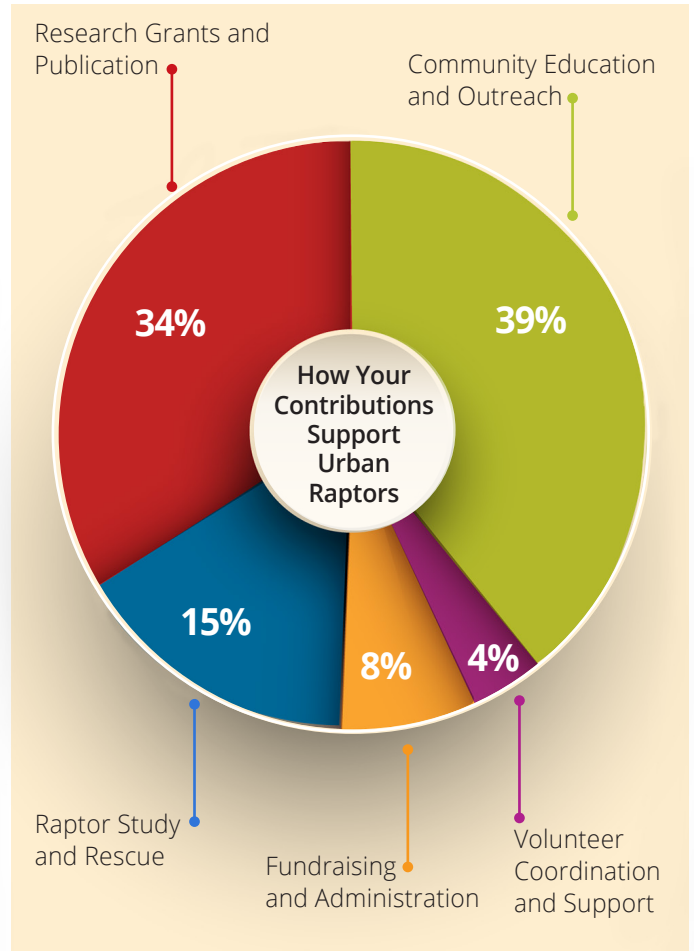
Thank you!

This is our final report for 2024. With your help, we continue this all-volunteer effort to study raptors in the Seattle area and share what we learn with the community. We could not do this without support from you, our donors, volunteers, and project partners, including the property managers at 1201 3rd Ave., AGC Washington (Seattle), and 1201 Pacific (Tacoma); Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife; the Seattle and Washington Departments of Transportation; Mercer Island Police; Birds Connect Seattle; and the PAWS Wildlife team.

We especially acknowledge financial support from the Seattle Patagonia staff and The Peter Mason Family Charitable Trust, along with our other recurring individual donors. Recurring donations provide us with a steady stream of funding, allowing us to focus on our mission and planning. Monthly donations help us maintain financial stability and execute our programs to more effectively serve our raptor community.



Future raptor expert (Kaitlyn Murdock)



Support URC

Please consider becoming a partner in our work. Your contributions support our long-term monitoring studies and other research, raptor ID bands, field work, newsletters, publications, and much more.

To donate online, go to urbanraptor.org/support-urc

To donate by check, please send to: 9251 39th Ave. S., Seattle, WA 98118

