

Summary of peregrine activity in Georgia

Several hundred peregrines have been released at numerous sites in the eastern U.S. since 1972, and the population has been partially restored. Successful nesting resumed in 1980.

Between 1987 and 1998, about 30 peregrines were released at Georgia sites, including Mount Yonah near Cleveland, Bell Mountain in Towns County, Tallulah Gorge in Habersham County, Cloudland Canyon in northwestern Georgia and downtown Atlanta. The first documented successful nest from releases was in Atlanta in 1996. Other nests since in Atlanta have been successful. In 2015, a peregrine nest was documented at Tallulah Gorge State Park, the first for Georgia in a natural setting outside Atlanta in some 80 years.

Here's a year-by-year look at restoration efforts and nesting since the late 1980s.

1988: Four falcons were released at Bell Mountain in Towns County.

1989: Three falcons were released at Mount Yonah near Cleveland. That same year, the first urban release was conducted when three birds were hacked from the Georgia Power Co. building in Atlanta. A male from that release became part of a pair that later nested in Atlanta.

1990: Three falcons were again released at Mount Yonah and three in Atlanta. An adult falcon showed up and harassed the young birds in the city, injuring one of them. The other two were recaptured and that release effort was abandoned. Possibly the adult was from the previous year's release and had established a territory nearby that remained undiscovered.

1991: Three falcons were released at Tallulah Gorge in Habersham County.

1992: Another three falcons were released at Tallulah Gorge. A pair of falcons attempted to nest in Atlanta on the Marriott Marquis, but they were unsuccessful.

1993: Three falcons were released at Cloudland Canyon, which is where the last-known wild nest was documented in the 1940s. This lower elevation site had been a lower priority because of the danger of predation by great horned owls.

1994: Four falcons were released at Cloudland Canyon.

1996: A pair of falcons nested on the Marriott Marquis and fledged three young, or eyases, after having abandoned a nest with one egg on a nearby building, possibly after disturbance by window washers. It is possible this pair had nested the two or three preceding years. Falcon sightings had been reported but no nests discovered.

1997: The Atlanta pair moved back to the downtown nest site at SunTrust Plaza Tower they had abandoned the previous year and produced three young. This marked the first year the nest site was available for viewing on the Georgia DNR's original web camera.

1998: The pair nested again in the same Atlanta location, but both young died of trichomoniasis, a protozoal infection of the mouth and throat usually caused by feeding on infected pigeons or doves. Also, three birds were released at Cloudland Canyon. One of these was killed, apparently by a great horned owl.

1999: Four young were fledged from the Atlanta nest, but one crashed into a window a few days later and died. Nestlings were treated for possible trichomoniasis infection as a precaution.

2000: Four young fledged from the SunTrust Plaza Tower site. Young are now routinely monitored for signs of trichomoniasis, but there have been no more problems.

2001: Two young fledged from the same downtown Atlanta location.

2002: Three young fledged from same Atlanta site.

2003: The first nesting attempt at the SunTrust site was abandoned when none of the four eggs hatched. The pair re-nested and fledged two young. A second nesting pair was discovered about 1 ½ miles to the north on a building in Midtown. At least one young fledged from that nest.

2004: Three young fledged from the downtown Atlanta nest. The Midtown pair fledged three young.

2005: The downtown Atlanta nest produced four young; Midtown produced three. DNR biologists searched the Lenox Mall area after reported sightings, but found no falcon nests.

2006: The SunTrust Plaza Tower pair produced two young. The Midtown nest produced two or possibly three.

2007: The downtown nest had four young. DNR biologists banded three and removed the fourth, which was sent to a veterinarian for treatment of trichomoniasis. The Midtown nest was active, as well. The number of fledglings there was estimated at two.

2008: The downtown nest produced three young. After fledging, two were found injured and treated. Fledglings from the Midtown nest were estimated at two.

2009: The SunTrust Plaza Tower nest produced three young. After fledging, one was found injured and later died. The Midtown nest produced an estimated three young.

2010: The downtown nest produced another three young, two males and a female. The female was found days later atop a nearby parking deck, suffering from trichomoniasis. The falcon was rehabilitated by Kathryn Dudeck of the Chattahoochee Nature Center and released from the parking deck rooftop on June 9. The Midtown nest produced an estimated three young.

2011: The downtown nest had four young, three females and one male. The Midtown nest had at least two young.

2012: The SunTrust Plaza Tower nest produced one female and two males. After fledging, the female was found at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and died of unknown causes. The two males appeared to be doing fine. The Midtown nest had two young. A third nesting territory was confirmed in the metro area, at a Dunwoody condo complex. That nest was made by a male falcon hatched in 2008 in Atlanta and a female from a wild New Hampshire nest in 2010, representing possibly the longest recorded dispersal of a nesting peregrine. But the mother proved inattentive to the nest. The two young, both males, appeared underfed and both fledged early. One was found dead in a parking lot. The second, after being returned to the nest and leaving the nest again, was rehabilitated and taken to Rock City for further care and successful release. A pair of territorial falcons was again observed in the Buckhead/Lenox Mall area but no nest was confirmed.

2013: Two females fledged from the SunTrust Plaza Tower nest. (The adults had four eggs; two did not hatch.) One of the young was seen flying by an office near the nest site a few days after the birds fledged. This marked the first year that the SunTrust nest was livestreamed on Ustream. The high-quality stream proved popular with viewers. A peregrine nest was also confirmed in Midtown, although there's been no word as of May 31 on the success of that nest. Two nesting territories were confirmed in the metro area this year.

2014: One young fledged from the SunTrust nest. Two eggs were laid; one didn't hatch. The SunTrust nest was the only nest confirmed in Georgia this year.

2015: All four young at the SunTrust nest fledged by late May. Earlier that month, a peregrine nest was discovered on a cliff at Tallulah Gorge State Park in northeast Georgia after rock climbers told park staff about being dive-bombed by raptors. The nest was the first documented in a natural setting in Georgia in some 80 years. The two eyases at Tallulah Gorge fledged by early June. Also that month, an adult peregrine and two fledglings were spotted at a midtown Atlanta building where peregrines had nested before, although no nest had been confirmed there this year or the past few years.

2016: A pair of peregrine adults was observed at the usual nest location on the SunTrust building in February-March, but they did not nest on the balcony despite exhibiting mating activity. A search of the upper floors in April revealed no nests. A pair of peregrines was reported mating, hunting and carrying food throughout March in the vicinity of Buckhead Grand (near Lenox Mall) and MeridianBuckhead. A nest site at Buckhead Grand was not confirmed. An adult pair and a hatch-year bird were observed near Four Seasons in May, though no nest was confirmed in this area either. A pair of falcons nested at Tallulah Gorge State Park for the second consecutive year. The nest, discovered March 20, was on the same cliff face as in 2015, but below last year's nest site and behind a large rock where it could not be seen. The park temporarily stopped rock climbing to protect the nest. A park ranger reported seeing an eyas at the nest site on July 25. It's not known if the bird fledged. Of particular note, a lone peregrine was seen at Sprewell Bluff Wildlife Management Area near Thomaston on May 12. Staff and birders will keep close watch on this site to see if perhaps a second "wild nest" might appear in coming years.

Note: Potential mountain nest sites have been checked via helicopter occasionally. No nests were found until DNR staff confirmed the nest at Tallulah Gorge State Park in 2015.