

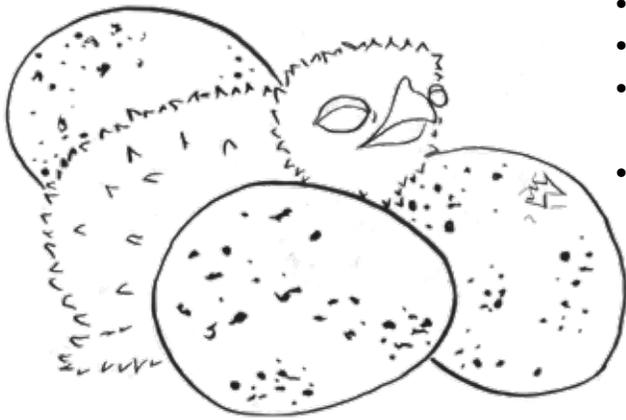
Specimen Spotlight Peregrine Falcon





The story of Peregrine Falcons showcases the ability of museum collections to help investigate species decline and to support wild spaces. Although falcons historically lived in the cliffs of Illinois, by the 1960s falcons were absent in the Midwest and declining worldwide. By comparing eggs across more than 100 years in museum collections (including the Field's), it was determined that a pesticide chemical called DDT was accumulating in falcons and making their eggshells too thin for the young to survive.

After the banning of DDT and the success of breeding falcons in captivity, the Chicago Peregrine Program started reintroducing birds into the city. Peregrines quickly adopted skyscrapers as the equivalent of their cliff habitats and found an ample food source in city pigeons. The birds are now thriving with over 20 active Peregrine pairs nesting on buildings in the city! The Chicago Peregrine Program continues to watch over the Illinois falcons, monitoring nest sites, conducting scientific research, and participating in public education. [Click here](#) to learn more about the Field Museum's work with Peregrine Falcons.



- Peregrines lay a clutch of 3-4 eggs.
- A newly hatched chick is virtually blind.
- Their hatch weight is 35-40 grams; that's less than a golf ball!
- In Chicago, Peregrines start hatching around Mother's Day (May 10).

- At 21-24 days old, flight feathers start poking through the fluffy down.
- The young birds are active and start to explore around their nest.
- This is the age when scientists put bands on the falcons' legs to identify them.



- At 35-40 days old, the down is almost all gone and replaced with flight feathers.
- Young birds exercise their wings by energetically flapping.
- First flights are often gliding down to a building below.

- Adult Peregrine Falcons are the fastest animals in the world, with diving speeds reaching over 240 miles per hour.
- Peregrine Falcons are very adaptable and can be found on every continent in the world, except Antarctica.

