

First falcons born in Paris since 19th century

April 30 2013



A peregrine falcon is born in a wooden box on June 7, 2011 on a windowsill in Lille, northern France. The first peregrine falcons to be born in Paris since the end of the 19th century have hatched at the top of a giant heating tower close to the Eiffel Tower, it was announced on Tuesday.

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The news has been greeted with delight by [conservationists](#) battling to build up stocks of a species that came close to extinction in France.

"It sends an important signal: when we apply ourselves, nature can reclaim its place in the city," Antoine Cadi of France's League for the Protection of Birds (LPO) told AFP.

The three chicks, known as eyases, were born in an artificial nest placed at the top of the 130-metre tower, two of them on April 25 and their sibling a couple of days later.

Since the births, the male of the adult pair has been busy hunting for his new family, taking out unsuspecting pigeons in full flight at speeds of more than 300 kilometres an hour (up to 200 miles an hour).

"They are the [cheetahs](#) of the skies," said Cadi.

The adult pair was first spotted in the neighbourhood in the autumn of 2011 but did not nest until one was created for them this year. All being well, the young will fledge in the second half of June.

[Peregrine falcon](#) numbers declined everywhere in the years after [World War II](#) because of the use of [organochlorine pesticides](#) such as DDT in agriculture.

Their numbers have begun to recover since these type of weedkillers were banned and they have progressively returned to city centres, where tall tower blocks offer an environment not unlike the coastal cliffs and mountainous terrain in which they also thrive.

The birds of prey were common in the Paris of the 19th century, nesting notably in the upper echelons of Notre-Dame Cathedral.

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