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Press Release

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[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

Verrazano Peregrine Falcon Couple Adopts 2: MTA Bridges Home to 11 New Chicks

Call it a tale of urban survival.

Two peregrine falcon chicks found in an unsuitable nesting place in Queens were relocated to the top of the Verrazano–Narrows Bridge's Brooklyn tower where they were welcomed into the nest by a mother falcon already caring for three new chicks of her own.

"The mother took in the adopted chicks without question and has been feeding them and watching over them as if they were always part of her brood," said Verrazano–Narrows General Manager Daniel DeCrescenzo. "It's truly nature at its best."

Chris Nadareski, a wildlife biologist with the city Department of Environmental Protection who coordinates the city peregrine falcon program in cooperation with the State Department of Environmental Conservation, said the relocation was necessary because the chicks would have had trouble safely leaving the nest area while learning how to fly.

The two adopted chicks were moved last week (May 28th), and a few days later, the two male and three female chicks were one big happy family.

This means that MTA Bridges and Tunnels, in addition to the Verrazano's two males and three female chicks, is home to a total of 11 new peregrine falcons this year. Four females hatched at Marine Parkway–Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge in Queens and two more – a boy and a girl – hatched atop the Bronx tower at the Throgs Neck Bridge.

All of the chicks hatched in late April and early May, and banding takes place several weeks later to allow the talons to grow to adult size. Each new chick receives an identification band so they can be tracked as they grow and reproduce. (Visit <http://www.mta.info/video> or <http://www.youtube.com/mtainfo> to see a short clip of the banding process)

The city's peregrine nesting program began in 1983 to help repopulate the peregrine populations, which were nearly wiped out in the 1960s as a result of pesticides in their food sources. They remain on the New York State Department of Conservation's endangered birds list.

When the program began only two nests existed in the city: one at the Verrazano–Narrows and another at the Throgs Neck Bridge. Today, the State DEC says there are 73 pairs of peregrine falcons state-wide, including 15 pairs in New York City.

"Without the MTA's cooperation in giving access to us and maintaining the nesting sites, we wouldn't have the kind of successful program that we do today," said Nadareski.

Urban falcons like to nest atop bridges, church steeples and high-rise buildings because they provide an excellent vantage point for hunting prey, including pigeons and small birds.

The Verrazano chicks have the most sweeping view of New York Bay from their perch 693–feet above the water at the Brooklyn tower. The Throgs Neck birds are 360–feet up on the Bronx tower, and the new falcons at the Marine Parkway Bridge have the most unusual nest; inside an old World War II gun turret 215–foot above the water on the Rockaway side of the bridge.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels' facilities, which connect the five boroughs of New York City, are the Robert F. Kennedy, Throgs Neck, Bronx–Whitestone, Henry Hudson, Verrazano–Narrows, Cross Bay Veterans Memorial and Marine Parkway–Gil Hodges Bridges, and the Queens Midtown and Brooklyn–Battery Tunnels.



Throgs Neck Bridge brother and sister duo give a soulful look into the camera before being banded



Moving day: One of two peregrine falcon chicks relocated from Queens and adopted by falcon mom with three new chicks of her own atop the Brooklyn tower of the Verrazano–Narrows Bridge

