

St George's Peregrines a Ringing Success

On Friday 18th May, an experienced team of ringers, working under a schedule 1 license, climbed St George's church tower to ring the chicks. The timing of the ringing was a very close match to previous years in terms of age of the chicks, and carefully chosen to be within the fairly narrow window available to do so safely.

Needless to say, the female - which had been feeding the chicks shortly before - kept a close eye on proceedings, circling the tower.



On a couple of occasions she even perched up on the platform perch or one of the turrets before setting off again.



The male was in attendance too, though he kept more of a distance. After carefully setting up ropes to secure those involved, Simon went over the edge to take the chicks from the nest and put them in a cloth bag before passing them back to the roof of the church. Once there, the three chicks were weighed and a series of measurements were taken, which suggested that we may have a female chick this year! DNA swabs were taken that will be analysed by the university's Animal and Plant Sciences labs, as will the unhatched egg, which was removed from the nest at the same time. Each chick was ringed with a silver ring provided by the British Trust for Ornithology as well as a coloured ring to enable the birds to be tracked individually.



This year's chicks have PRA, PSA and PTA on orange rings, so do share any sightings of them once they've left the nest. As soon as this had been done, they were returned to the nest, and we climbed back down. Shortly afterwards, the female was back on the nest platform and things settled back down to normality.

All of this is very positive, and is the result of many people coming together to protect these wonderful birds. And those rings are precisely what have told us that the male at Wakefield cathedral came from Sheffield, having been ringed as a chick at St George's on 16 May 2014. Sadly, however, not all news in the last couple of days has been good. The same BTO rings that enabled us to confirm where one of the 2014 chicks has gone have confirmed that a Peregrine found dead near Bradford in suspicious circumstances was one of the 2016 cohort from St George's. Peregrines are protected by law, but that doesn't deter some people from continuing to persecute them. Whether or not this was the case here is unclear at this stage, but seems likely. Do keep an eye out for the Peregrines around Sheffield: they still need our support to ensure others can enjoy the spectacle of these magnificent birds in our skies.

