



Earth Week 2020

Celebrate Rhode Island Raptors!



Peregrine Falcon

(Photo credit: Peter Green)

Sixty years ago, Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles were nowhere to be found in Rhode Island, and the Osprey population was in steep decline. The toxic chemical DDT was widely used as a pesticide and had infiltrated the food chain and affected the populations of these birds.

People took action!

In 1972, after scientist Rachel Carson wrote the famous book *Silent Spring*, environmental organizations like Audubon fought to protect birds and habitat and DDT was outlawed in the United States. Through hard work, scientists and volunteers teamed to reestablish the Peregrine Falcon population in New England. In the west, Peregrine Falcons nest high up on rocky cliffs. In Rhode Island, without mountains and steep cliffs, the five breeding pairs of Peregrine Falcons nest on tall buildings and bridges. Check out the Audubon Peregrine Falcon web cam located on top of the “superman” building in downtown Providence. <https://asri.org/view/peregrine-cam.html>

The Osprey population has rebounded, and these raptors are now easy to spot across the Ocean State. People have helped the species by putting up nesting platforms in locations near Narragansett Bay and other bodies of water. In 2019, Audubon volunteers monitored 123 active Osprey nests in Rhode Island. Explore.org has a number of excellent web cams. To watch an active Osprey nest, click on <https://explore.org/livecams/ospreys/osprey-cam-chesapeake-conservancy>.

Osprey

(Photo credit: Ed Hughes)





Bald Eagle

(Photo credit: Heidi Farmer)

Before the 1960s, Bald Eagles were regular winter visitors to Rhode Island. They flourished feeding on fish in the open waters of the Narragansett Bay watershed. After the impacts of DDT, they all but disappeared from the region for thirty years. Similar to the Peregrine Falcon, scientists worked to reestablish Bald Eagle populations in New England. Although their recovery has been slow, they are back. In the winter months, they are regularly seen on the Seekonk River and other bodies of open water. While most of these majestic birds travel to breeding grounds farther north, there are now four Bald Eagle pairs nesting in Rhode Island. Currently there are no Bald Eagle web cams in Rhode Island, but the American Eagle Foundation has several web cam options <https://www.eagles.org/what-we-do/educate/live-hd-nest-cams/>.

Rhode Island Raptors in the City

Peter Green is a photographer and graphic designer living and working in downtown Providence. He walks the city, documenting Peregrine Falcons and more urban wildlife from Red-Tailed Hawks nesting on rooftops to American Kestrels hunting in graffiti-covered alleys. These regal, powerful raptors seem perfectly at home among the landscape of bricks and concrete.

Visit his website to view his work, <http://www.providenceraptors.com/>.

