

Falcon news: end of season

By the start of March even late-starters are done raising chicks. Independent chocolate juvenile falcons are now moving out of home, away from their parents' territory, so you will start seeing falcons in different places. Keep an eye out for those numbered colour bands – we banded 28 chicks this season.

The parents are now finally getting a bit of R&R after a busy breeding season. We've followed 37 pairs, with 29 nests this season. But breeding success was fairly low (apparent success 55% rather than 65–77% in better years). 'Apparent' because some early nest failures will have been missed since they're harder to detect. So why the poor success? Nest cameras at almost all nests this year showed that predators (stoats, ferrets and cats) caused 38% of failures. Forestry operations (particularly during early lay) are the most obvious explanation for 31%. The final third left no clues, partly because they failed before we got a nest camera in.

Ten falcon pairs nested near harvesting, landprep and roading work. Because of your help with info on what happened and when, we've got a good understanding why four pairs failed - plus why another three pairs kept successfully raising their chicks. (The other three nests in operational areas got munched by stoats and ferrets, after ignoring work nearby).

We're really grateful for all of your help this year: sightings, info on operations, banding, and all those actions keeping work at a respectful distance. As we move into autumn and winter, falcons will make less of a fuss when you come near, and range further as they go hunting. So please still keep an eye out for those bands - winter sightings are just as interesting.

- Kalinka and Graham

