

Trump Parc Red-tailed Hawks

Photographs by D. Bruce Yolton



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In New York City, a pair of Red-tailed Hawks nested on the 35th floor of the Trump Parc building in early 2005. Formerly the Barbizon Plaza Hotel, the building is located at 106 Central Park South just west of Sixth Avenue.

In the spring, after their first eggs failed to hatch, the pair were successful with their second set of eggs. Two eggs hatched in early June and the two young hawk nestlings (eyasses) left the nest (fledged) in late July.

In 2005, the Trump Parc hawks were the only breeding pair of Red-tailed Hawks in Central Park. Neither the famous 5th Avenue hawks, Pale Male and Lola, or the 97th Street pair, who have each bred in past years, had any offspring in 2005.

This book is a brief photo essay about the Trump Parc parents and the early life of their two offspring.

Central Park South

Facing west, the nest is located on top of a decorative architectural element, called a corbel, only a few feet wide. The nest has excellent views which include the western half of Central Park, most of the West Side, the Hudson River and the George Washington Bridge.

The nest is surrounded by excellent perches that allow the parents to keep an eye out for trouble and return quickly to the nest, if necessary. These perches included a number of buildings on Central Park South, 57th Street and Columbus Circle.

Except for a pair of Peregrine Falcons and the occasional Kestrel, there wasn't much that bothered the hawks, 35 floors above the hustle and bustle of New York City.

The two young eyasses appear on the nest in the right hand photo on the lower row of corbels, just to the right of center.





Left: The parents on the nest (father on left, flying off)

Right: 6 weeks later with the young eyasses on the nest



The parents would fly down 58th Street from Sixth to Eight Avenue which then “exited” into Columbus Circle which has a great updraft. They treated 58th Street as their own urban canyon.



Their perches included 1345 Sixth Avenue at 55th Street, the eastern Hampshire House chimney and the Essex House sign, both on Central Park South.



Further west, 240 Central Park South, the CNN sign atop 1775 Broadway at 58th Street and the Time Warner building on Columbus Circle were popular spots. All had a direct view of the nest.





The parents seemed to be the most urban of the various Central Park Red-tailed Hawks. Here, the mother discovers the Christopher Columbus statue in Columbus Circle.



The birds often soared above the West Side to the delight of apartment dwellers and office workers.



The Nest

In 2005, the parents began building the nest in February. They used branches from trees on terraces atop buildings up and down 58th Street, but mainly used branches from a tree on a terrace a few stories below the nest on the east side of the Trump Parc building.

The pictures that follow of the two eyasses were taken in late July, on two occasions, 42 and 46 days after the first eyass had hatched. They fledged soon thereafter, on the 48 and 49th days.

A tripod with a horizontal extension rod was used to take most of the photographs out an apartment window. The camera was controlled remotely from inside the apartment, so as to minimize any disturbance of the eyasses or their parents.









The eyasses panted in the hot afternoon sun.





As the sun set, the birds' activity increased.









Eating too big a piece, the eyass can't fully swallow an attached feather.



The eyass shakes and twists its head in hopes of taking care of the feather.



Seeing that her eyass is having difficulty swallowing the feather, the mother (right) comes down to the nest to make sure everything is all right.



Off To The Park

About 48 days after hatching, the largest of the two eyasses, fledged (left the nest) followed the next day by the smaller of the two young hawks.

They spent a few days on the building roofs and terraces of various building on both 58th Street and Central Park South before venturing off into Central Park. Both parents kept a watchful eye on their young fledglings, and kept them well fed as they made their way into the park.

Within five days, both birds were safely in the park.





Freed from the confines of the nest, the smaller fledgling practiced jumping and making short flights on its first day off the nest.







Above: The first to fledge was the last to make it into the park. Seen here on its last day on Central Park South, it appeared on balconies just west of the Trump Parc building.

The First Weeks In The Park

In the southwest portion of the park, the Heckscher playground was being rebuilt and a cyclone fence surrounded the construction site. It was a perfect safe haven for the young fledglings during their first weeks in Central Park.

The young hawks would explore the areas surrounding the playground but they didn't venture too far. In the first few weeks, their father did most of the feedings and kept a close eye on them.

After watching their father hunt for a few weeks, they began to hunt as well. Their first attempts were comical, but they soon began to catch mice, rats and pigeons.

In the heat of August, they spent many lazy afternoons trying to keep cool, sometimes playing in the sprinklers.





The first hawk to fledge was the last to make it into the park. When the hawk finally made it into the park, we got to see it fall asleep.



As day turned to night, and the sounds of the park changed from song birds to crickets, we saw eyes slowly close and a head drop.



During the first few weeks, the young hawks hadn't learned to be shy of humans, and would land in very public areas like this bridge railing.





Paparazzi, tourists and pedestrians all got to see the young hawks up close. Sometimes a little too close.





They were awkward at first. On the lamppost above, the young fledgling had trouble figuring out where to place its foot. At right, a young hawk jumps a few feet up a tree branch.







Far Left: The father brings a snack for one of the fledglings. Left: The father
Center and Right: The mother



The safe haven of the playground construction area.





Central Park had no shortage of food and the young hawks had plenty to eat.





During the heat of August the fledglings discovered the park's sprinklers and chased after each other in the late afternoons.



Growing Up

Soon the young hawks were hunting for themselves and learning to fly high above the park. Although they would often return to the playground area to eat their prey, they started venturing into greater areas of the southern park and began to explore the buildings on Central Park West.

Their father took over the central role of looking after them, with the mother being less involved as time went on.





A young hawk looking proud to have caught a pigeon.





The Heckscher ball fields.





The Carousel at dusk.





The Mall and the area just southeast.





By September, both hawks were regularly seen flying high above the park, often with their father as an escort.



Once they began to fly with ease, they discovered the buildings on Central Park West in the low Sixties. In the center, a Mockingbird is harrasing a young hawk.



And Then The Young Hawks Were Gone. . .

Or were they? The two young hawks became very difficult to find after about mid-September, although there were occasional sightings into October.

Scientific studies aren't much help explaining how young hawks separate from their parents except for providing a clinical phrase, *Natal Dispersal*. Studies report a wide range of behavior, with some young hawks staying close to the parents through the winter, while other hawks may leave their parents after ten weeks and migrate as far south as Mexico.

What we do know for sure, is that the park ended up being a perfect place for these young hawks to grow up in. It provided them with plenty of food and a safe, fenced in construction area for their first few weeks off the nest. Like it has for so many others, the Big Apple turned out to be a great place to live both for the adult hawks and their offspring.

Hopefully, the parents will continue to nest on the Trump Parc building and be successful in breeding for many years to come.

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Web Site: www.yolton.com Email: bruce@yolton.com