

**For Immediate Release:**

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**Clara Returns: Peregrine Falcon Mama Is Back  
at San José City Hall for a Third Year**

***On Valentine's Day, Falcon Fans Wonder:  
"Will Carlos Reappear for Mating Season?"***

*SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA* – For the third year in a row, falcon fans from around the globe can tune in to San José's wildest reality show featuring Clara, a rare peregrine falcon who makes her home in a nestbox located on top of a ledge on the 18-floor San José City Hall.

"I am delighted to have Clara back for another year," said Mayor Chuck Reed. "She and her young have encouraged schoolchildren throughout our community to learn about nature and conservation while they have delighted fans with their antics. I enjoy watching them soar and hunt outside my office window. Along with the thousands of falcon fans around the globe, I am hoping that Carlos returns and we have another successful season."

In 2008, Clara and Carlos' three chicks – girls named Cielo and Meyye and a boy named Mercury – hatched on Earth Day, providing a strong reminder that the species had been close to extinction in California as recently as 1970, when only two known pairs of peregrine falcons remained in the wild in California. Today, thanks to extraordinary conservation work, there are more than 250 nesting pairs, including those at San José City Hall.

Falcon fans can watch the San José City Hall nestbox live via the FalconCam, a webcam that officially returns on Valentine's Day. This webcam is maintained by the City of San José in partnership with the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group at the University of California – Santa Cruz. The FalconCam is online at both:

- City of San José website at [www.sanjoseca.gov](http://www.sanjoseca.gov).
- Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group website at [www.scpbrg.org](http://www.scpbrg.org).

SCPBRG students and volunteers will play a larger role this year, and during this transition, hours in which staff and volunteers "drive" the camera and follow the nesting falcons and their offspring may be more limited than in the past. Scientists from the SCPBRG will answer questions throughout the season on the nearly 2,000-member online discussion group at <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/SanJosePeregrines/>.

Scientists are also available for school assemblies which include a visit by one of the SCPBRG's tame falcons.

Those who are interested in supporting the San José City Hall falcons and the work of the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group can do so by making a tax-deductible donation. Gifts may be made:

- Online through UC-Santa Cruz's internet giving site at:  
<https://npo.networkforgood.org/Donate/Donate.aspx?npoSubscriptionId=7267>
- By check made out to UCSC Foundation/SCPBRG. Checks may be mailed to  
Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group  
University of California Long Marine Lab  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Those interested in corporate sponsorship of the FalconCam and science and environmental education programs related to the City Hall falcons, may contact Michelle McGurk in the office of Mayor Chuck Reed at [michelle.mcgurk@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:michelle.mcgurk@sanjoseca.gov) or (408) 535-4800.

“Clara and Carlos and their offspring have delighted thousands of people throughout San José and all over the world,” said Mayor Reed. “The City Hall falcons have a devoted and passionate following online and in visitors who come Downtown to do some falcon-watching. It is my hope that this passion will translate to support for the great work that the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group is doing to promote the preservation of these majestic birds for future generations.”

### **Background on the San José City Hall Falcons**

San José's Richard Meier-designed City Hall opened in October 2005. Employees first noticed a pair of falcons, whom birdwatchers named José and Clara, in the Spring of 2006. The Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group placed the nest box on the south end of the City Hall tower later that year.

### **First Nesting Season – 2007**

In early spring 2007, José and Clara were again regularly observed together in the area. The web camera was positioned near the nest box. By mid-February the birds were observed engaging in typical courtship behavior, and by late March, José and Clara had laid a total of three eggs in the nest box.

All three eggs hatched successfully, an extremely rare occurrence, on April 28, and the world watched the progress of the three young peregrine falcons. The chance of survival for the fledglings was constantly in peril, while they learned to survive in a big city environment.

As the three fledged in June 2007, middle school students entered a contest to name them. Hiko (male), Spirit (female), and Esperanza (female) were the winning names. The youngsters left San José over the summer to find territories of their own. They were banded with identification bands, and bird watchers in the East Bay discovered Esperanza frequenting the Siebel building in Emeryville.

José was last seen in July 2007. As falcons typically mate for life, birdwatchers were concerned about the disappearance of this devoted mate and father.

### **Second Nesting Season -- 2008**

In late January 2008, it became clear to falcon-watchers that Clara had a new mate, who was dubbed Carlos because he frequently perched on the Marriott Hotel on San Carlos Street. On March 13, Clara laid the first egg of the falcon season and three more followed over the next several days. Three of the eggs hatched on Earth Day (April 22).

More than 130 schoolchildren from throughout San José entered the Mayor's naming contest, with falcon fans voting to name them Cielo (female, Spanish for "sky" or "heaven"), Meyye (female, Miwok for "bird"), and Mercury (male). Young Mercury was the first to fly on May 28.

The 2008 offspring were adventurous, taking flight at a young age, according the SCPBRG scientists, and each one had to be rescued by scientists and volunteers and returned to the roof of City Hall at some point during their initial flying lessons.

Sadly, Cielo died after colliding with a Downtown building. "Her death reflected the realities that are faced by wild and endangered animals. Many young Peregrine Falcons do not survive the first year in the wild as they crash into cliffs and also face many natural predators," said Glenn Stewart of the SCPBRG. "It was an important lesson that real life is not the Disney Channel."

Both Mercury and Meyye went on to great success over the summer of 2008 and were spotted frequently throughout Downtown San José. They have since headed out for territories of their own.

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