



- Return of the Peregrine Falcon project

A DIFFERENT KIND OF HACKER

In 1998, a group of volunteers in the Okanagan, under the leadership of the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club, decided to become part of the *Canadian National Peregrine Falcon Recovery Plan*, and established the goal of producing a single, breeding pair of falcons in the Okanagan by the year 2000. In its first year, 1998, the Okanagan falcon project raised over \$200,000 in cash, including a major funding commitment for the past two years from the Vancouver Foundation, and in-kind donations to bring the predatory birds back to an area that was once their home. A pair of breeding falcons had not been seen in the Okanagan since 1959. The naturalists have determined that DDT was the main factor in the deterioration of the species.

In order to re-introduce the birds, a method, which is called "hacking", was developed. Four young falcons were placed in a "hack box" on top of a tall building to protect them from predators and the elements. "Hack attendants" fed the birds through a shoot until they were ready to instinctively try their wings by jumping off the top of the building.

The *Return of the Peregrine Falcon* project has captured the

imagination of residents young and old in the Okanagan. A *Name Our Baby* contest brought in over 12,000 entries from school children between ages five and 15. A summer reading program, entitled *Awesome Animals*, enjoyed participation from 700 Okanagan school children over their summer holidays. Teaching units on Okanagan endangered wildlife developed under the falcon program were distributed to 50 schools. "Arthur", the peregrine falcon, visited 40 schools accompanied by a BC Parks naturalist. The project also developed three educational units on endangered species and spaces in the Okanagan Valley for Grade levels K-3, 4-9, and 10-12, which will reach more than 30,000 students in School District 23 and two adjacent school districts during 1999.

Concern for the future of four baby birds has enlisted an impressive group of "honourary hackers" including representatives from BC Tel, the BC Fruit Growers Association, the Regional District of Central Okanagan, the Mayor of Kelowna, local members of Parliament and members of the Legislative Assembly and media personalities.



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Diving into the classroom.