

Hawks, falcons strike fear in landfill gulls

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Bryony Griffiths, a trainer with Pacific Northwest Raptors, works recently with a Saker falcon at the Brady Road landfill site. (CBC)

Winnipeg is using predatory birds — hawks and falcons — to scare off nuisance gulls from the city's main landfill site.

The city contracted Pacific Northwest Raptors from British Columbia, which trains falcons and hawks for appearances in films, to bring in the birds and their handlers.

The pilot program has been highly successful since it started in early May, said Jeff Hawley, supervisor at the Brady Road landfill in the south end of the city.



Specially-trained Red-tailed hawks and Saker falcons are being used to scare off seagulls at Winnipeg's landfill. (CBC)

There was an estimated 4,500 gulls hanging around the landfill when the crew of specially-trained Red-tailed hawks and Saker falcons arrived.

Now there are about 300 to 350 gulls on any given day, the others driven off, Hawley said.

The program has worked so well a decision has already been made to renew it for next year, he added.

"We've actually had zero kills of the gulls. The raptors have been this effective [in chasing them off]," said Hawley.

Bryony Griffiths, a trainer with Pacific Northwest Raptors, said the gulls scatter as soon as one of the hawks or falcons takes to the air.

Four handlers works shifts from dawn to dusk to keep the gulls away.