

2019 Raptor Resource Project Banding Report



Peregrine falcon A/47 Lefty at RedBird Bluff in DeSoto, WI. Photo credit Kathleen Carlyle

It's my pleasure to present our report detailing banding activities and our 2019 nesting season. For over 30 years, the Raptor Resource Project has played a pivotal role in the reintroduction and monitoring of the Midwest peregrine falcon population. From its beginnings in 1988 to the present, our raptor monitoring and banding programs play an important role in understanding the stability of the peregrine falcon population and potential issues or threats. RRP volunteers enhance our programs, contributing many hours to nest site monitoring, live cam operation, and public raptor education initiatives. Landowner partners, students, and the public help drive our programs and are also its beneficiaries. We invested extra effort into our bald eagle-based *Education in Action* program this year, building on its prior success and that program continues to gain participants across the country and benefit from the expertise of teacher practitioners who have used it as a model teaching tool.



Director John Howe at Xcel Fort St. Vrain

Whether it was falcons, eagles, or kestrels, this year was dominated by effects of the black fly and flood conditions along the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Many of the nests we monitor or broadcast through live cams were subjected to higher than normal black fly populations. The black flies led to early abandonment of our eagle nests at Decorah and Decorah North, and our lone falcon male at Great Spirit Bluff. It was interesting that many sites were not affected by the black flies, indicating variable outbreaks along different watersheds. We visited 35 sites and banded 69 young falcons and two adult falcons. We were pleased to see healthy falcon young at several sites that have not been productive recently – seven years for Riverview Tower in MN and 10 years for Leo's Bluff in IA! We are excited about potential activity at Effigy Mounds National Monument 20 years after the historic two-year release of cliff-hacked falcons at Hanging Rock. It would be a monumental occasion to band peregrine falcons there in 2020.

It was a great season and third year of trapping, monitoring and banding raptors at our Hawk Hill banding station on the NW corner of the Luther College campus. We also added coverage along the Mississippi River with a monitoring station near Pikes Peak in NE Iowa. Dave Kester and Jon Stravers worked closely with Emily Neal of the Center for Sustainable Communities and Environmental Studies to coordinate the program for college interns. This marks the close of our third program year providing students with unprecedented direct access to raptor conservation research.

2019 was a year of renewal for our eagle nests in Iowa. We all had the opportunity to observe a mate changeover at each nest – Decorah Male 2 (DM2) at the Decorah nest and Decorah North Female (DNF) at the Decorah North nest. The successful adoption of our man-made eagle nest at Decorah North was a major accomplishment and marks the second successful eagle nest building project we have undertaken. Both DNF and DM2 have returned to their respective nests in late 2019 and it appears that we will have two active bald eagle nests to observe and enjoy in 2020.

I'll end with a mention of the resiliency of our American Kestrels in SW Wisconsin and migrating waterfowl along the Mississippi River Flyway. Despite an incredible number of black flies, the WI kestrels successfully fledged four young. It was an atypical year for both timing and numbers of migrating waterfowl observed along the flyway. Extended flooding through the summer and fall affected habitat and cover. We thoroughly enjoyed the raptors and waterfowl migrating through and hope to in the years to come. Here's to a productive year ahead!

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who helps us monitor sites, ID falcons, track hatch dates, band falcons, and supports our work with donations. You are a crucial part of what we do. A special thanks to Bill Smith for all of his work monitoring sites and bringing in volunteers including Maggie Jones, Mark Blackburn, Jane Furchgott, Ken Lange, Matt Berg, and Susi Hickey Nehls, and to Kathleen Carlyle for allowing us to use her beautiful photo of Lefty (and for everything else she does). Many thanks also to our forum members! We are deeply grateful for your work monitoring young and keeping Amy on her toes!

Education is a core part of our mission. A heartfelt thanks to all of our moderators, especially lead Decorah Eagle mods jfranc1, Tulsa, and (for much of the season) Oregonian; lead Decorah North Eagle mod BremerBirdFan, Facebook lead mods Sherri Elliott and RaptorResource ModV, and the lead mod on our new Flyway chat, izzysamlikeseagles. Your leadership, dedication, and hard work are a vital part of our success. Our moderators volunteer long hours and are an invaluable source of information and inspiration for millions. Thank you so much for your hard work, knowledge, and experience. We are deeply grateful for the best moderating teams around!

Thanks also to our camera operators, Explore.org mods, and the people who capture and post video to YouTube, especially Dave Reynolds, Tulsaducati, Eaglewhisperer18, Camop Spish, Camop Coqui, CamOp Eaglewind, Sandy, TX Ninja, Blossom Holland, 70chico1, Mochamama, ginger52, Arlene Beech, Lizzie Eaglespirit, Chickiedee64, Lori D, and LifeMedia. Your hard work makes sure that no one misses life in and around our nests!

We couldn't follow our eagles without Brett Mandernack! A very special thanks to Brett, the Eagle Valley staff, David and Ann Lynch, and Brian Malaise for their hard work trapping D27 and sharing data and maps with us. We have learned so much we would never have known without you.

Power plants, stackhouses, and other industrial sites have been crucial to the recovery of the peregrine falcon. We really appreciate the staff that help us get it all done, including Tina Lopez, Curtis Dominicak, Jaime Massey, Vikas Neekhara, Bill Wardell, John Tradewell, Bridget Shore, Tawney Meyer, Randy Capra, Frank Sperlak, Jessica Keller, Cheryl Erler, John Kaczmarek, Luke Kusilek, Liam Grainger, Bill Heston, Justin Nelson, Lynn Hall, Dale Micheletti, Brad Foss, Ben Campbell, Jim Larson, Dean Pagel, Chuck Bremer, Doug Braff, Karen Kiekow, Trevor Shearen, Jeremy Holman, Jim Fuchs, Jeff Blank, Brenda Geisler, Wendy Hoornstra, Melody Imholte, Matt Quick, Randy Mata, Bridget Shore, Dustin Sanborn, and Huntley Leverenz. Again, we couldn't manage all these sites without you!

A big thanks to landowners, site volunteers, and DNR staff, including Gary Grunwald, Myrna Buri, Joyce Caley, the Howe family, Jim and Aggie Olson, Dan and Sheila Broughtman, Wally and Tim Truttman, Stephen Grulkowski, Crystal and Steve Fauster, Rich King, the Nature Conservancy, the Guider family, the Dagendesh family, Dean Peterson, Doug Wood, Dave Noble, Sally Bolton, Mark Rasmussen, Dean Edlin, Gary Wolf, Pat Schlarbaum, and Matt Bonar. Another shoutout to the folks at the Bird Banding Lab, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, and the Brice Prairie Conservation Association. We appreciate your support and help.

And finally, a big thanks to Explore.org, especially director Charlie Annenberg and Courtney Johnson, Candice Rusch, Jonathan Silvio, and Liz Marks for all their help and support. We'd also like to give a shoutout to Justin from A2Z Security for his hard work and technical support.

Thanks, everyone, for all you do on behalf of the birds!

John Howe, Director Raptor Resource Project

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Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

Xcel Prairie Island, Red Wing MN, Goodhue County

Adult Data

Female: Freya *Y/*E, a 2008 hatch from the Colonnade Building

Male: Unknown

Nesting Data

Laying began: Unknown

Hatch began: 6/08/19 (estimated)

- 1266-01929 | b/blu 50/R | Joker

The Prairie Island falcons were very interesting this year! On April 11, Frank Sperlak reported that the female falcon was sitting in the box, probably on eggs. We guesstimated hatch on May 13 and set the banding date for May 31. On May 16, Frank checked the box and reported seven eggs! What was going on? We thought that the resident falcon, an unknown female with very faded purple and black/green bands, was displaced by a younger rival after egg-laying began. Imagine our surprise when Frank reported that falcon number two was the original falcon! Unsurprisingly, only two eggs hatched. Of those two, only one falcon survived. Freya (identified from a photo that Frank took), was extremely defensive and swooped in close to chase the banding crew away! Little Joker (named after a Prairie Island employee) was very well-fed and handled nicely.

Prairie Island is about 1.92 miles from our Skidmore Bluff site, and about 6 miles from our Red Wing Grain site. It isn't uncommon to see drama here, since PI is a prime nest box facing excellent hunting and nesting habitat. We are very curious to see what happens next year!

Year falcons first nested: 1997 | Total number of young produced (2019): 69



Frank Sperlak and Joker



Another look at Joker!

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

Xcel Monticello Plant, Monticello MN, Sherburne County

Adult Data

Female: Banded black/red, but could not read number

Male: Unbanded

Nesting Data

Laying began: unknown

Hatch began: 5/14/19 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/06/19 | Site visits: 6/06

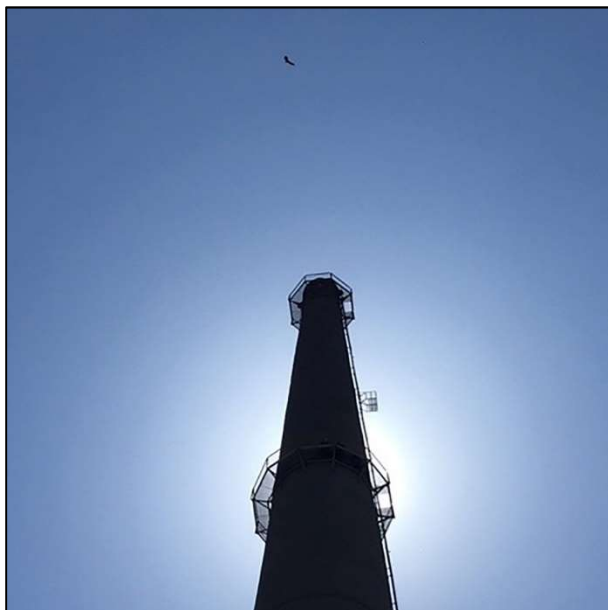
- 1266-01911 | b/blu 31/R | Matt

Raptor Resource Project personnel John Howe and Amy Ries climbed the stack with Xcel employee Matt Quick and a rescue team to find one healthy little falcon. We also found prey remains, including a nighthawk, two black-billed cuckoos, and a northern flicker (yellow-shafted). Amy spent some time trying to get a band number but had no luck – the day was a little too hot and the falcon was a little too far away.

This nest box was built over twenty years ago by late RRP Board president Rob MacIntyre and a shop class from North Community High School in Minneapolis. Xcel Energy will be replacing it with a similar design later this summer. We appreciate Monticello's commitment to their falcons!



Matt Quick with a rescue team member and falcon Matt



The Monticello stack



RRP Director John Howe banding on the stack catwalk

Year falcons first nested: 1995 | Total number of young produced (2019): 59

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

Xcel High Bridge, St. Paul MN, Ramsey County

Adult Data

Female: Artie 15/P, a 2016 hatch from Xcel Prairie Island

Male: Chuck 06/D, a 2016 hatch from Multifoods/City Center in Minneapolis, MN

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/13/19

Hatch began: 5/24/19

Banding date: 6/11/19 | Site visits: 3/15, 4/23, 6/11

- 1266-01919 | b/blu 38/R | Anton
- 1266-01920 | b/blu 39/R | Polly

Xcel High Bridge loves their falcons, which makes banding a blast! A whole crew joined us on the roof: Luke Kusilek, Scott Anton, his niece Jenny, Manuel Castillo and his grandson Amos, intern biologists Laura Ringeison and Forrest Close from Xcel Prairie Island, and friend Amber Burnette. The two little falcons were healthy and nicely fat, with no ectoparasites or bites. It was a lot of fun to bring the next generation face to face with them as we banded!



Amos with a nestling falcon



Mother Artie, a 2017 hatch from Xcel Prairie Island



Polly (left) and Anton (right)

Year falcons first nested: 2000 | Total number of young produced (2019): 26

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

Xcel Energy Sherco Plant, Becker MN, Sherburne County

Adult Data

Female: unknown. Band is b/r 6?/?

Male: unbanded

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/30/19

Hatch began: 6/06/19

Banding: 6/26/19 | Site visits: 6/26/19

- 1266-01926 | b/blu 40/R | Waylon
- 1266-01927 | b/blu 41/R | Tom

Resident female 30/B laid two eggs this spring, one on April 7th and one on April 11th. She disappeared during a snow storm and her eggs were completely buried in snow and ice. A new female showed up not long afterwards. The male courted her, and she laid two eggs of her own beginning on April 30. We were beyond thrilled that Sherco was productive after all – as were the plant employees, children, and a 4H group that joined us for the banding!

We've had questions about handling the falcons without gloves. We encourage handling nestlings bare-handed to improve tactility and avoid disturbing their emerging feathers. These little guys can't bite or foot hard enough to do damage to us, but mishandling could impact feather growth. How about stress? We monitor the falcons and if they show signs of stress, they go back into the kennel. In small groups, employees sometimes handle birds while we band. We give a quick tutorial on how to do it and no one ever has to hold, touch, or get close to a falcon who doesn't want to. Handling is kept to a minimum to avoid overstressing the little falcons.

Watch the falcons at <https://birdcam.xcelenergy.com/> or <https://www.raptorresource.org>.

Year falcons first nested: 1992 | Total number of young produced (2019): 68



John shows off a newly-banded falcon



Xcel employee Liam Grainger with falcon

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

Xcel Energy Allen S. King Plant, Oak Park Heights MN, Washington County

Adult Data

Female: Kris 69/W, a 2011 hatch from the MN Power Clay Boswell plant in Cohasset, MN

Male: Slate 08/C, a 2012 hatch from the Colonnade Building in St. Louis Park, MN

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/25/19

Hatch began: 6/06/19

Banding: 6/27/19 | Site visits: 6/27

- 1266-01930 | b/blu 43/R | Cyclone
- 1947-43834 | b/blu D/52 | Megawatt
- 1947-43835 | b/blu D/53 | Croix



Cyclone, Megawatt, and Croix in the nest box

The peregrine utility program started at the Allen S. King plant in 1988, when Paul Simonet, an Xcel energy employee and falconer, told Bob Anderson that there was a falcon on site. Bob was doubtful – falcons had just returned to nesting in the wild in 1987 – but checked it out. Paul was right! Plant manager Mike Miser gave Bob permission to install a nest box on the 400' level of the stack catwalk. In 1990, a young falcon named Mae became the first falcon to nest at a power plant. Mae nested at the King plant until 2004, when she was replaced by Belinda. Belinda was replaced by Kris in 2014. All three falcons were formidable birds and the King plant currently leads Xcel's falcon production pack with 74 falcons since 1990. It is our second-most productive site by raw numbers and our most productive by descendants.

This year, we were racing a storm! John went up to get the young while Amy got the station ready, including bands out for three males and three females, pop rivets picked and paired, tools out, and book ready. While John was on the stack, the wind came up, but he was able to get the falcons and bring them down the stack. Although we got them banded quickly, we didn't beat the storm front! Once it had passed, Amy went up to return the falcons. They were healthy and looked great, with no external parasites or fly bites.

We also found a new use for selfie sticks here! Amy bought a really long one to check a hard-to-reach nest box at Greysolon Plaza. It turns out they are also great for bringing otherwise unreachable young falcons into reach. We'll be adding it to the banding bag next year! #falconselves

Watch the falcons at <https://birdcam.xcelenergy.com/> or <https://www.raptorresource.org>.

Year falcons first nested: 1990 | Total number of young produced (2019): 74

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

Minnesota Power Hibbard Plant, Duluth MN, St. Louis County

Adult Data

Female: 70/H Sanguine, banded after her second year by Jackie Fallon.

Formerly nested on the Hallet 5 Ore Dock

Male: unknown

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/04/19

Hatch began: 05/13/19

Banding date: 6/05/19 | Site visits: 6/05

- 1947-43813 | b/blu D/34 | Viking
- 1947-43814 | b/blu D/35 | Benton
- 1266-01910 | b/blu 30/R | Lincoln



The stack needed a drone inspection after material fell from the top during high winds in early May. MPL agreed to postpone the inspection until we banded the falcons. After John banded falcons, he descended, and Amy went up to serve as a decoy while John observed from below. We worked with the drone operators to set time limits, lay in a drone approach that would minimize the risk of drone/falcon interaction, and set conditions for pulling back if the falcons appeared to take interest in the drone.

At one point, the female falcon cocked her head to look up at the drone. But neither she or her mate approached it or flew up above it. Both falcons concentrated on Amy, who spent the entire inspection time near the nest box, making as much noise as she could. The drone operators landed the drone without incident, Amy came down the stack, and 70/H returned to the nest box perch! All three falcons fledged on June 24th. Nora has some wonderful photos posted on our forum at <https://www.raptorresource.org/forum/index.php?topic=655.645>.

Where did the falcon's names come from? MN Power is very enthusiastic about their falcons and they had an employee naming contest! The falcons are all named for MN Power sites.

Watch the falcons at <https://www.mnpower.com/Environment/FalconCam> or <https://www.raptorresource.org>.

Year falcons first nested: 2003 | Total number of young produced (2019): 47



Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

Minnesota Power Clay Boswell Plant, Cohasset MN, Itasca County

Adult Data

Both falcons were unbanded

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/24/19

Hatch began: 5/30/19

Banding: 6/21/19 | Site visits: 6/21

- 1947-43832 | b/blu D/50 | Freedom
- 1266-01925 | b/blu 48/R | Liberty

The adult female at Clay Boswell has the unusual behavior of staying in her nestbox and 'kickboxing' intruders instead of flying out and hitting them. Amy captured her by hand to make banding safer for the banders, the falcons, and the support crew. The young falcons were healthy, with no external parasites and nice crops.

We wish we knew where the adult falcons came from. *Kristin and Lindsey help with banding on the Boswell stack*

This site attracts unbanded adults year after year.

While they are probably from the North Shore, some 104 miles east of Clay Boswell, it would be nice to know for sure. Tree nesting has been documented in peregrine falcons in the US as recently as 2013: <https://bit.ly/2NT6b8d>.

Watch the falcons at <https://www.mnpower.com/Environment/FalconCam> or <https://www.raptorresource.org>.

Year falcons first nested: 1993 | Total number of young produced (2019): 79



Great River Energy, Elk River MN, Sherburne County

Adult Data

Female: Breezy 31/P, a 2015 hatch from Xcel Energy's Allen S. King plant

Male: 65/M Brooklyn, a 2012 hatch from the Colonnade Building in St. Louis Park, MN

Nesting Data

Laying began: 3/28/19

Hatch began: 5/08/19

Banding: 5/28/2019 | Site visits: 5/28

- 1947-43825 | b/blu 52/P | Meggie
- 1947-43826 | b/blu 53/P | Amelia
- 1266-01901 | b/blu 21/R | WilliamR
- 1266-01902 | b/blu 22/R | Charlie



Falcon friend Brenda Geisler at Great River Energy

The Great River Energy nest box is located on top of a turbine building, at the roofline, roughly 100 feet from the ground. Boy Scout Daniel Sundberg built the nestbox as his Eagle Scout project. We installed it in 2006 and it attracted falcons by the spring of 2007. Unfortunately, the plant is being closed. Brenda Geisler, who manages the

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

falcons here, has been looking for another nest box location nearby. We hope she can find one, but we'll miss the Elk River Station. Brenda has been a wonderful caretaker and plant employees really enjoy watching and learning about their falcons.

All four young falcons looked healthy. Charlie had a few hippoboscids in his left wingpit, but they were easily squashed! We named WilliamR after Brenda's Dad, Meggie after her grand-daughter, and Amelia and Charlie after children who attended.

Year falcons first nested: 2007 | Total number of young produced (2019): 38

Red Wing Grain, Red Wing MN, Goodhue County

Adult Data

Female: unknown

Male: unknown

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/3/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/18/19

Banding date: 6/04/19

Site visits: 4/26, 5/20/ 6/04, 6/12

- 1947-43811 | b/blu D/32 | Bracia
- 1947-43812 | b/blu D/33 | Ceres

We were thrilled to have this site back online after two years! In 2017, an infertile falcon from Canada replaced the resident female. 77/X and her mate went through all the motions, but she never laid eggs. 77/X was replaced this spring. We're not sure who this new female is, but she laid three eggs and hatched two. The little falcons were in great shape, with full crops and a few hippoboscids, but no blackfly bites. A big thanks to Jim, Pauline Biederman, and Dean Pagel for all of their support and enthusiasm over the years.



John and Ceres

Based on *Guide to Management of Peregrine Falcons at the Eyrie*, Ceres (pictured above) is 17 to 18 days old. Her down is fluffy, her primary feathers have broken their sheaths, her tail is just starting to poke out, her beak is just starting to darken at the tip, and juvenile feathers are not yet visible on her head and body. While we prefer falcons to be around 21 days old when we band them, they can be sexed at 17 days based on tarsus thickness and middle toe length/proportions. Vocal pitch and overall size/weight can also provide helpful cues if you know or can estimate the falcon's age.

Year falcons first nested: 2000 | Total number of young produced (2019): 44

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

Bay State Milling, Winona MN, Winona County

Adult Data

Female: 88/C Jerry, a 2006 hatch from Lynxville Bluff

Male: unknown

Nesting Data

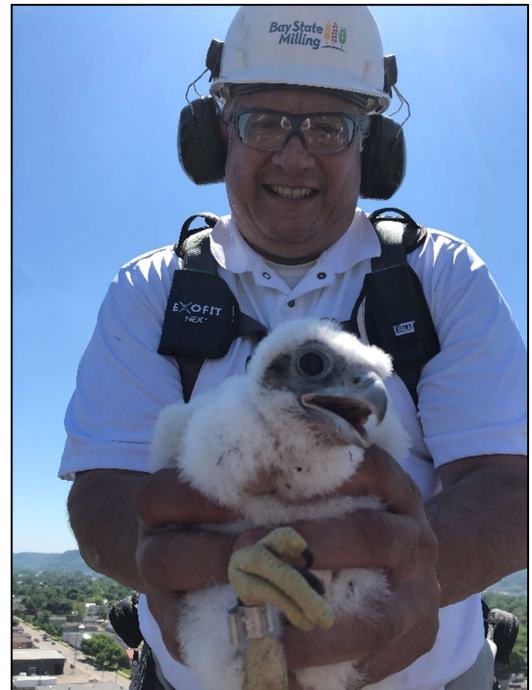
Laying began: 4/03/19 | Hatch began: 5/16/19

Banding: 6/07/19 | Site visits: 35/03, 5/31, 6/07

- 1947-43817 | b/blu D/38 | Mia
- 1947-43818 | b/blu D/39 | Stefania

John, Amy, and Dustin Sanborn banded two healthy young falcons on the roof while Dave Kester used a spotting scope to get Jerry's band number. Based on prey remains, pigeons are the number one item on the menu here by far. Falcons are an excellent source of organic pigeon control – and pigeons are always an issue in any area with grain mills and a nice downtown.

When we replaced the falcons, we noticed that the gravel was in pretty bad shape. Amy and Isaac Ries replaced it on July 30th. Watch the falcons online at www.raptorresource.org.



Bay State Milling loves their falcons!

Year falcons first nested: 2009 | Total number of young produced (2019): 29 | Total sites in complex: 2

Ardent Milling, Lake City MN, Wabasha County

Adult Data

Female: 86/P Mya, a 2017 hatch from Bay State Milling

Male: Unknown

Nesting Data

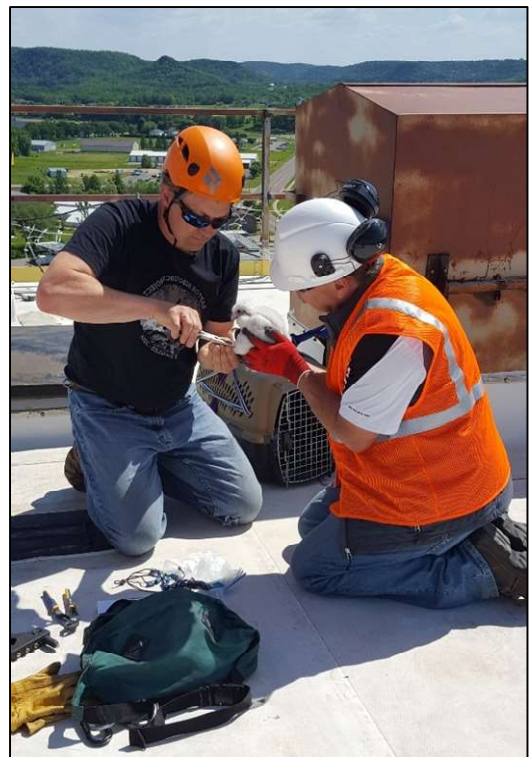
Laying began: 4/03/19

Hatch began: 5/16/19

Banding date: 6/10/19 | Site visits: 5/28, 6/10

- 1266-01916 | b/blu 36/R | Dagda
- 1266-01917 | b/blu 37/R | Freyr

Ardent Milling was unproductive in 2018. Charlette, a relatively old falcon, may have been unable to lay viable eggs, or an immature falcon could have taken the site but failed to lay because she was too young. We found three nestlings when we came to band this year, but one had a very badly twisted foot and a greatly enlarged tarsus with a sore spot, as John pointed out, from 'standing' on its tarsus instead of its foot. Its toes were also badly croggled. Instead of banding it, we took it to the Raptor Center. Unfortunately, it could not be saved. All three falcons had some hibboboscids and ear



Banding falcons on the roof at Ardent Milling

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

screw worm, although the injured falcon was by far the worst off in terms of body burden of parasites. We will clean the nest box out and replace the gravel before next season.

Year falcons first nested: 2002 | Total number of young produced (2019): 52

3M, Cottage Grove MN, Washington County

Adult Data

Female: Unknown. Has a black/blue band

Male: John N/52, a 2014 hatch from the Ford Parkway Bridge in St. Paul, MN

Nesting Data

Laying began: Unknown

Hatch began: Unknown

Banding: 6/27/19 | Site visits: 6/27

- 1266-01928 | b/blu 49/R | Ari

We weren't going to band at 3M this year because of safety concerns about nest box access. I was thrilled to get a call from Trevor, who told me that 3M's solo falcon had grounded on its maiden flight. It looked fine, but did I want to come assess and band it? I did!

We met Trevor and Steven at the base of the watertower and quickly assessed and banded the falcon. Trevor and Steven put it on the roof of a nearby building and it found its way back up to the nest box later that day.

Year falcons first nested: 2008 | Total number of young produced (2019): 27

Rob's Nestbox, Greysolon Plaza, Duluth MN, St. Louis County

Adult Data

Female: Unknown. Could not get band.

Male: Junior 89/B, a 2013 hatch from Sappi Paper

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/11/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/21/19 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/11/19 | Site visits: 6/5/19, 6/11/19

- 1947-43824 | b/blu D/45 | Breanna
- 1947-43827 | b/blu D/46 | Miriam
- 1266-01918 | b/blu 42/R | Edward

We couldn't get a band number, but we were quite confident that 'Canada', a bird notorious for hitting



Falcon Ari at about 39/40 days of age



The view from the roof at Greysolon. See the nest box?

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

everyone, was gone. Although she complained, she didn't come close enough to hit! John and Amy collected three healthy young falcons and brought them down to the community room, where we banded them and introduced them to the residents. It was so rewarding to see everyone light up as they watched and interacted with us and with the falcons and told us their falcon stories! They were fascinated by every aspect of the banding and we answered a lot of questions about these falcons in particular, falcons in general, DDT and recovery, and how and why banding was done. We were joined by Greysolon property manager Wendy Hoornstra and about 20 Greysolon residents. Falcons 'Edward' and 'Miriam' are named after two former property managers who were extremely supportive of the nest box program.



Breanna, Miriam, and Edward

Duluth provides ample prey year-round and may serve as an 'island' for wintering falcons that come in from across the Northland. Check eBird reports for more: <https://bit.ly/2O3B89O> (and select Duluth, MN).

Year falcons first nested: 2003 | Total number of young produced (2019): 44 | Total sites in complex: 2

Riverview Tower, Minneapolis MN, Hennepin County

Adult Data

Female: Gypsy N/53, a 2005 hatch from Sartell Paper

Male: Frisco K/13, a 2006 hatch from Lock and Dam 1

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/13/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/23/19 (estimated)

Banding: 6/12/19 | Site visits: 6/12/19

- 1947-43828 | b/blu D/47 | Dottie
- 1947-43829 | b/blu P/83 | Hansel
- 1266-01921 | b/blu 44/R | Captain Tom

It was wonderful to have falcons back at Riverview Tower after an absence of seven years! The young were healthy, well-fed, and nicely footy. We took the young inside to band them and escape their angry parents. Building supervisor Randy Mata could not have been more pleased!

Falcon Dottie was named after a special resident who passed away shortly before we banded the falcons. We hope to see Dottie nesting somewhere in the years to come.



Randy was thrilled to have falcons back!

Year falcons first nested: 2010 | Total number of young produced (2019): 9 | Total sites in complex: at least 2

Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

Great Spirit Bluff, Dresbach MN, Houston County

Adult Data

Female: P/87 Michelle, a 2005 hatch from Maassen's Bluff south of Nelson, WI

Male: Unbanded, referred to as 'Newman'

Nesting Data

Egg laying began: 4/02/19

Hatch began: 5/12/19

Banding date: 6/01/19 | This site is watched 24x7 via camera

- 1947-43849 | b/blu D/28 | Kira
- 1266-01909 | b/blu 29/R | Carson

Michelle laid four eggs and two hatched – a fairly common occurrence this year. The little falcons looked very healthy at banding: nice full crops, no ectoparasites, and no blackfly bites. But on June 5, blackflies started showing up in force. Video shows the young falcons twitching their heads and huddling by the fan, perhaps because the wind helps keep the flies down. (Note Michelle's incredible rescue of nestling Kira at 3:46 - (<https://youtu.be/aQjaXSfts8o>). On the morning of June 9, Kira was killed by a Great Horned Owl. On the afternoon of June 11, Carson abandoned the nest box, ending up in the brush below the cliff. He survived the fall and his parents cared for him. Neither entered the brush, but they dropped a veritable buffet of birds for him to eat. Their carcasses attracted several raccoons, at least one of whom stopped and sniffed the young bird out before sauntering off. Michelle and Newman strafed another raccoon that climbed out on a limb, driving it away.

Eventually the bluff fell silent and Michelle appeared to leave the area of the nest box. We were all getting worried about Carson when he appeared on the afternoon of June 27! We think he started fledgling from tree limbs, hop-flapping from tree to tree and moving downslope, away from the bluff. Michelle followed him throughout, disappearing from our sight as Carson moved away. He eventually gained his wings and returned, much to everyone's delight!

GSB remains our most productive cliff site despite the blackfly problems. Watch the GSB falcons at www.raptorresource.org and <https://explore.org/livecams/raptor-resource-project/peregrine-falcon-cam>

Year falcons first nested: 2005 | Total number of young produced (2019): 44



Amy and Board member Jeff Worrell banding at GSB



Peregrine Falcons: Minnesota

P-4 (Homer Bluff), Homer MN, Winona County

Adult Data

Female: unknown

Male: unknown

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/02/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/10/19 (estimated)

Banding: 5/30/2019 | Site visits: 3/15, 4/14, 4/23, 5/05, 5/30, 7/14

- 1947-43802 | b/blu D/22
- 1947-43803 | b/blu D/23
- 1947-43804 | b/blu D/24
- 1266-01905 | b/blu 25/R



Falcon D/24 with the banding book. Photo by Amber Burnette

After several years of nesting in a small pothole on Homer's north face, the falcons returned to the giant cave-like pothole near its top. This pothole is raccoon-accessible, so we were pleased to find four healthy young falcons waiting for us! John and Amy retrieved the falcons and Dave and Amber Burnette banded them up top. He was a little perplexed by D/24. D/24 seemed 'maleish', but the 6B band was too tight on its legs. He ended up using a 7A and we marked the anomaly in the MPS database.

We don't know who the adults, but they sure came in close! They also did a good job protecting and caring for their young. During a follow-up survey on July 14, Amy saw a fledgling falcon fly in and perch at the top of the cliff.

Year falcons first nested: 2007 | Total number of young produced (2019): 25 | Total sites in complex: 2



Amy trying to get a photo of the fast-moving female!



John at the eyrie. It's big but narrows rapidly towards the back.

Peregrine Falcons: Iowa

Dubuque County Courthouse, Dubuque IA, Dubuque County

Adult Data

Adult female: She-beast D/20, a previously unbanded bird caught and banded by Dave Kester
Adult male: Jeff 58/N, a 2013 Savanna silo hatch

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/01/19

Hatch began: 5/10/19

Banding: 5/29/2019 | Site visits: 5/29

- 1266-01903 | b/blu 23/R | Julien
- 1266-01904 | b/blu 24/R | Dash
- 1947-43850 | b/blu D/21 | McKenna

The falcons are nesting in a large tray under an arch on the third floor of the courthouse. Since the female isn't able to strike invaders on the wing, she stays in the tray and runs at them instead! After last year, Dave decided to capture her. He went up the ladder, got her in hand, returned to the ground, banded her, and canded her before bringing the young down. We quickly banded them and released her. This process was much safer for us and for the falcons!

You can watch the falcons online here:

<https://dubuquecounty.org/courthouse-falcons/>

Year falcons first nested: 2017 | Total number of young produced (2019): 6



Dave with She-Beast



She-Beast tenderly brooding her young

P-15 Alliant Energy Lansing Cliff, Lansing IA, Allamakee County

Adult Data

Adults unknown

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/01/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/11/19 (estimated)

Banding date: 5/31/19 | Site visits: 3/21, 4/11, 6/06, 6/20, 7/14

- 1947-43806 | b/blu D/26
- 1947-43807 | b/blu D/27
- 1266-01907 | b/blu 27/R
- 1266-01908 | b/blu 28/R

The blackflies were TERRIBLE. John, Amy and Dave all descended to look for the falcons and Amy found them in the older box on the south side of the cliff. One young falcon (maybe 20 days of age) was perched on the lip of

Peregrine Falcons: Iowa

the box until Amy scared it back in. John and Dave did their best to clean blackflies and treat fly bites at the top of the cliff, but the little falcons were already badly bitten, especially around their facial disks and other bare and lightly-feathered areas. We checked this box about the time that we should have been seeing fledge, and a month after that. Since we didn't see or hear any activity on the bluff during either visit, we suspect that the falcons succumbed to blackflies.

Leo's Bluff Complex, Harper's Ferry IA, Clayton County

Adult Data

Adults unknown

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/06/19

Hatch began: 5/16/19

Banding: 6/09/19 | Site visits: 3/21, 6/09

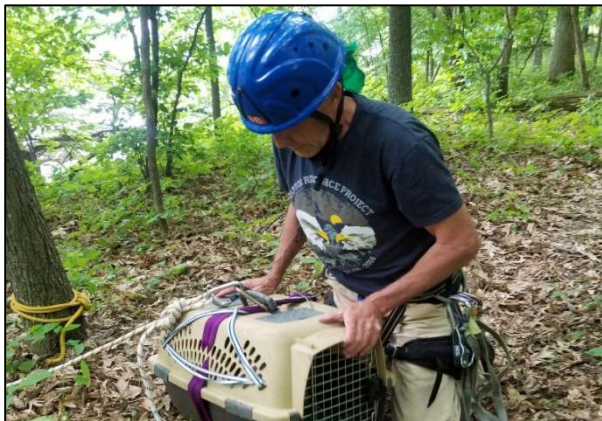
- 1947-43819 | b/blu D/40 | Kestra
- 1266-01914 | b/blu 34/R | Leo
- 1266-01915 | b/blu 35/R | David

The falcons were in a large pothole system one bluff upstream of Leo's Bluff. They were 24 to 26 days old, healthy, and had very few fly bites. The nest pothole was narrow and deep and the whole complex was overhung, making it weather safe. We were surprised to see raccoon tracks very close to the nest! They were most likely attracted to cached prey and, as we saw at Great Spirit Bluff, may not have been interested in facing feisty parents and young. The eyrie also had excellent boltholes. Given what we've seen 20-day-old birds squeeze into, the narrow cracks could provide a safe place to hide from almost any predator, including raccoons. John and Amy went to get the falcons, Dave and Sophia Landis banded them, and John Stravers provided guidance from a boat on the river. After several unsuccessful years, we were very happy to have falcons here again!



Sophia with falcon Kestra

Year falcons first nested: 2004 | Total number of young produced (2019): 7



Dave with the falcon kennel, aka bird taxi



John and Amy on the bluff

Peregrine Falcons: Wisconsin

Xcel Energy Ashland Plant, Ashland WI, Ashland County

Adult Data

Adult female: Unknown

Adult male: 69/C Babyface, a 2010 hatch from Bunge Grain in McGregor, IA

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/4/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/29/19 (estimated)

Banding: 6/20/19 | Site visits: 6/20

- 1947-43830 | b/blu D/48 | Pinky
- 1947-43831 | b/blu D/49 | Sienna
- 1266-01923 | b/blu 46/R | Caden
- 1266-01924 | b/blu 47/R | Finn

Xcel employees Lynn Hall and Dale Micheletti and local birder John Radloff helped us band falcons on the roof. The little falcons looked great, with nice big crops and a serious attitude! Sadly, Pinky died shortly after fledge. Photos sent from the site show trauma near her left elbow and along her patagium, so we suspect she hit something and died. The other three gained their wings and fledged without incident.



Dale Micheletti and John Radloff

Falcons first nested: 2014 | Total number of falcons produced (2019): 20 | Total sites in complex: 2

Dairyland Power Alma, Alma WI, Buffalo County

Adult Data

Adult female: 89/P Adeline, a 2017 hatch from Homer Bluff

Adult male: C/97 Kiwi, a 2006 hatch from the Allen S. King plant in Oak Park Heights, MN

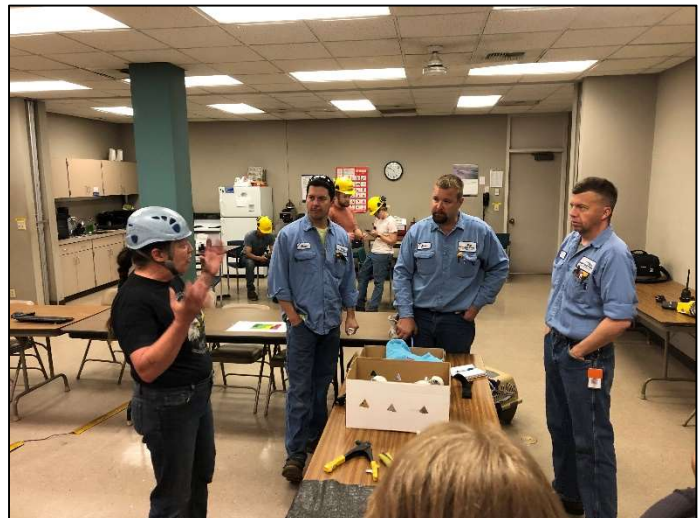
Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/04/19

Hatch began: 5/17/19

Banding date: 6/07/19 | Site visits: 3/15, 4/23, 6/07

- 1947-43815 | b/blu D/36 | Scout
- 1947-43816 | b/blu D/37 | Polar
- 1266-01912 | b/blu 32/R | Vortex
- 1266-01913 | b/blu 33/R | Energizer



Falcon banding at Dairyland Power Alma

Since Dairyland Power took down one of their utility stacks on October 1st, 2018, they built a new nest box and moved it to another stack on the property. Would the falcons adopt it or nest on the cliff? The site was unsuccessful in 2017 and 2018, and all of us wanted to see it

Peregrine Falcons: Wisconsin

come back online this year. We were thrilled when new female Adeline, a 2017 hatch from Homer bluff, paired with resident male Kiwi and produced four young in the new nest box. In addition to four healthy young falcons, we found the head of a Northern Shoveler duck in the box! While the peregrine falcon is also known as the duckhawk, this is one of just three times I've found duck parts in a nest box.

You can watch the falcons here: <http://www.dairylandpower.com/content/bird-cam> and here: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/dairyland-power-falcon-cams/>

Year falcons first nested: 1997 | Total number of young produced (2019): 75 | Total sites in complex: 5

US Bank, La Crosse WI, La Crosse County

Adult Data

Adult female: 1687-16211, an unnamed 2016 hatch from Sappi Paper in Cloquet, MN

Adult male: Unknown

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/11/19

Hatch began: 5/21/19

Banding: 6/13/19

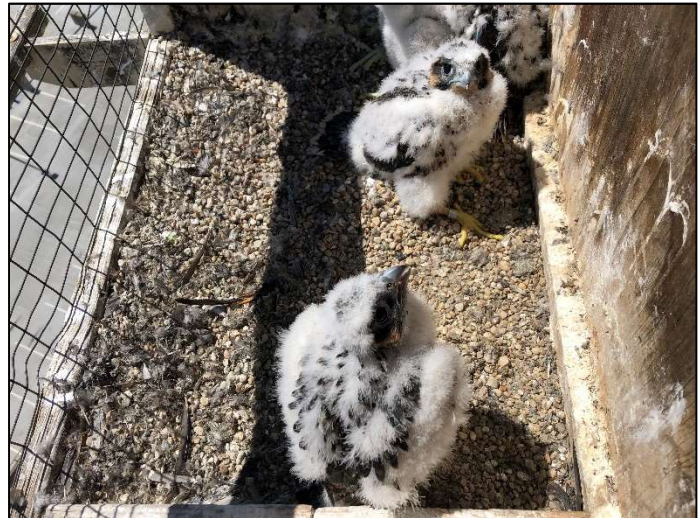
- 1156-23720 | b/blu A/70 | Holden
- 1156-23723 | b/blu A/71 | Charlie
- 1156-23754 | b/blu A/72 | Zak
- 1156-23755 | b/blu A/73 | Benny

The 23-day old falcons looked healthy, with no external parasites. John and Dave banded the falcons in the lobby of the US Bank Building. This banding tends to be popular, since building visitors can watch the falcons grow up on a monitor in the lobby or observe them from nearby rooftops. The falcons were named by children in the audience.

As usual, the fledglings ended up on the street as they learned to fly. We had several calls and emails from people who saw the young birds on the ground. We love the pride and concern that the City of La Crosse has for its falcons! Jeff Blank, the building supervisor, is a great falcon friend and he made sure they were safely returned to the rooftop.

If you compare these 23-24 day-old falcons with their 17-day old counterpart at Red Wing Grain, you'll see that they have a lot more feathers poking through their white down. Their wing primaries are longer, their tail feathers are a lot longer, and they have more feathers on their facial disks.

Year falcons first nested: 2006 | Total number of young produced (2019): 39



Temporary fencing blocks the front of the nest box during retrieval



Banding in the US Bank lobby

Peregrine Falcons: Wisconsin

Redbird Bluff, Desoto WI, Crawford County

Adult Data

Adult female: A/47 Lefty, a 2015 hatch from US Bank

Adult male: Unknown

Nesting Data

Laying began: 3/27/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/03/19 (estimated) | 4 laid, 2 hatched

Banding date: 5/30/19 | Site visits: 3/22, 5/30

- 1947-43805 | b/blu D/25 | Rex
- 1266-01906 | b/blu 26/R | Jaxom

Lefty and her mate moved to another pothole on Redbird Bluff, making it the third site in as many years here. Although Mom Lefty has been very consistent in her general nesting location – a row of holes towards the of the cliff – she has yet to nest in the same home twice. Dave tried to get to the eyrie twice but was unable to find it. After he was hit by a rock, Amy replaced him. The third time was the charm! Although it took a little ledge crawling, she found the eyrie and retrieved two healthy-looking young. The little falcons were protected from the weather, free of ectoparasites, and had a nice ledge system to run around on and fledge from. She lowered the falcons – the eyrie is maybe 30 feet off the ground – and Dave and John banded them below. They were joined by landowner Rich King, his wife, and his grandson Jaxom.

Given the problems we had with blackflies and weather this year, we ran several follow-up surveys to determine production at fledge. Rich reported that his falcons fledged successfully. He regularly heard and sometimes saw them around the bluff.

Year falcons first nested: 2017 | Total number of young produced (2019): 7 | Total number of sites in complex: 3



Lefty A/47, a 2015 hatch from US Bank La Crosse, 22 miles north of Redbird.



Jaxom, Dave, and falcon!

Peregrine Falcons: Wisconsin

P-11: Maiden Rock, Maiden Rock WI

Adult Data

Adults unknown. Female banded black/green

Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/08/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/18/19 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/03/19 | Site visits: 3/15, 4/23, 5/3, 5/31, 6/03, 6/29, 7/14

- 1947-43808 | b/blu D/29 | Elise
- 1947-43809 | b/blu D/30 | Martilia
- 1947-43810 | b/blu D/31 | Adia

John, Amy, Dave, land manager Dean Edlin, DNR employee Joe Krumrie and his family, and DNR interns Jacob Kunze, Donovan Risch, and Larkin Hoepner joined us for the Maiden Rock banding. We

were concerned about the falcons given all the blackfly problems this year, but they looked great! Dave reported that the eyrie was fantastic – well protected, with plenty of room out front to laze and explore. After we finished banding, Amy and John descended to photograph a ledge on the cliff face. According to Dean, we found several types of sage, Cheatgrass (an invasive grass that was a bit of a surprise, since it hasn't been recorded on top of the bluff), and an unknown plant with blue flowers. Coolest of all, one of the sage species had been recorded by early surveyors but hadn't been identified since. As the blufftop prairie was plowed under and planted, this little sage survived on a remote plot of land about halfway down the bluff, unseen and unknown until June 3 of this year.

Amy made two follow-up visits in late June and mid-July and found all three falcons both times. If you like watching falcons, we highly recommend stopping by the bottom of this bluff in July!

Falcons first nested: 2001 | Total number of falcons produced here (2019): 40 | Total sites in complex: 6

Twin Bluff, Nelson WI, Buffalo County

Adult Data

Adults unknown

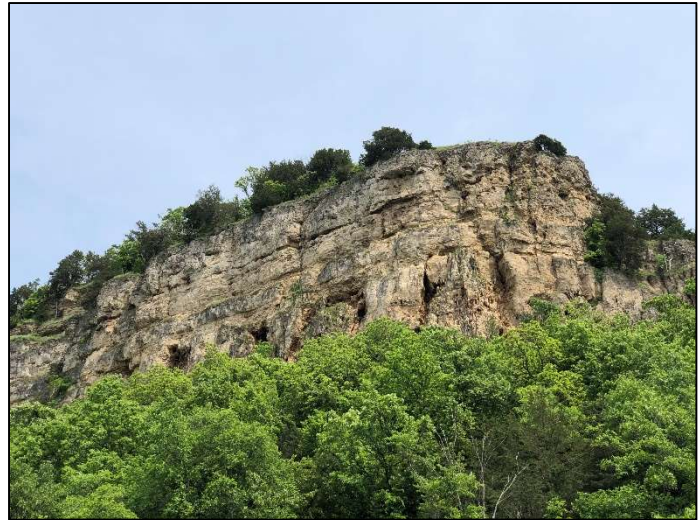
Nesting Data

Laying began: 4/11/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/21/19 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/10/19 | Site visits: 3/15, 4/24, 6/9, 6/29, 7/17

- 1947-43820 | b/blu D/41 | Moose
- 1947-43821 | b/blu D/42 | R2D2
- 1947-43822 | b/blu D/43 | Monty
- 1947-43823 | b/blu D/44 | Red Rocket



Maiden Rock



The falcons at the eyrie, which is deep, narrow, and protected from weather and predators.

Peregrine Falcons: Wisconsin

We installed a nest box here in 2009, but the falcons nested in a large pothole downstream of the box for the second year in a row. We were unable to reach them last year, but we came prepared this year! After quietly setting up, John quickly rappelled down to the eyrie with a falcon fetcher. The young falcons were dozing on a large ledge ledge, so he was able to block the entrance to the eyrie and collect them by hand. Amy banded the falcons up top with Myrna and her daughter and grandchildren, who were visiting from Alaska.

All four young falcons looked very healthy. On June 29, Amy confirmed at least two, one looking very close to fledge and one maybe two days from fledge. We were glad this site was successful and are looking forward to seeing where the falcons nest on this territory next year!



The site looking west across the river with the adult female on defense

Year falcons first nested: 2014 | Total number of young produced (2019): 22 | Total sites in complex: 3

Skidmore Bluff, Hager WI, Pierce County

Adult Data

Adults unknown, male is very aggressive

Nesting Data

Laying began: Unknown

Hatch began: 5/20/19 (estimated)

Banding: 6/12/19 | Site visits: 3/15, 4/23, 5/3, 5/31, 6/12, 6/29, 7/14

- 1266-01922 | b/blu 45/R | Skidmore

This is always an interesting site to band at, since we have to tie off to the undercarriage of a truck to rappel down the cliff. This year, the falcons nested in a pothole about 65 feet from the top of the cliff. On one hand, this is a long drop. But it offers better cover from the extremely aggressive male, who hits anyone that goes over the edge!

When Amy got to the eyrie, she was surprised to find it empty. John, who was perched at the lip of the cliff, could see a lot of whitewash on a ledge about ten feet north and five feet below the eyrie. Amy checked it and found a young falcon clinging precariously to some vegetation on a steep ledge. After John, Isaac Ries, and landowners Tim and Christine Truttman banded the falcon, Amy put it in the eyrie. We watched the cliff to verify that the adults found Skidmore in his new location.



Skidmore in the kennel. The astroturf helps cushion the trip up the bluff and gives young falcons something to grip.

Why didn't we return him to the ledge? He didn't hatch on the ledge, which was so steep that eggs would have rolled off as they were laid. He didn't even have room to turn around and had to cling to vegetation to keep from falling. Why was he on the ledge? We think he was exploring and fell or abandoned the eyrie due to blackflies. Amy did not see him in two follow-up visits, although she did see the female fly in and perch in an unusual spot very low on the cliff during her first follow-up.

Year falcons first nested: 2011 | Total number of young produced (2019): 13 | Total sites in complex: 3

Failed Sites

Bellevue State Park, Bellevue IA, Jackson County

Date: 5/29/19

Since we didn't know what was going on here, John Howe spent 45 minutes watching the nest box from below the bluff. He didn't see or hear falcons, but he did see a turkey vulture, a bald eagle, a red-tailed hawk, and a red-shouldered hawk fly right by the nest box. When Amy rappelled down to check it, she found blue jay, nighthawk, and oriole feathers, along with pellets and relatively fresh eggshell fragments. The shell was thick, healthy-looking, and broken into small pieces like the female had eaten and trampled it. Based on our observations and those of park staff, who reported seeing and hearing falcons just five days before, we believe there was a hatch this year. We don't know why the site failed.

Guiders Bluff, Lansing IA, Allamakee County

Adults: unknown

Laying began: 4/16/19 (estimated)

Hatch began: 5/26/19 (estimated)

Site visits: 3/21, 5/31, 6/20

Amy found four three to five-day old hatchling falcons in the nest box on May 31. But when John rappelled down on June 20, he found nothing except small pellets. The young and adult falcons had vanished.

What happened? With only a few exceptions, our southern nests did poorly this year. We banded falcons at Alliant Lansing, but the young don't appear to have survived to fledge. We found the carcass of a young falcon at Bunge McGregor, eggshell but no falcons at Glen Haven, and eggshell and prey remains but no falcons at Bellevue State Park. South of Lansing, we verified production at just three of eight nests: Redbird Bluff, the Dubuque County Courthouse, and Leo's Bluff. While nestling falcons can succumb for a number of reasons, blackflies appear to have been the culprit at Guider's Bluff (they were swarming the hatchlings on May 31), Alliant Lansing (they were swarming the young falcons on June 6), and possibly at Bellevue State Park (park employees reported that the blackflies had been nearly unbearable in the week leading up to our arrival). We are discussing how to handle the problem moving forward.

Bunge Grain, McGregor IA, Clayton County

Date: 5/31/19

Adult male: K/41, a 2017 hatch from Guider's Bluff that was in the movie 'Decoding the Driftless'

Adult female: unknown

Dave, John, and Sophia visited Bunge Grain. Dave had seen young falcons in the nest box during several survey trips, so all three were looking forward to banding them. Unfortunately, the adults were gone, and they found nothing except the carcass of a young falcon on the roof. The carcass was too badly decomposed to determine a cause of death.

Maassen's Bluff, Nelson WI, Buffalo County

Date: 6/07/19

Dave Kester rappelled down to find one dead female and one dead male falcon, both about 23 days of age. He brought them up and we conducted a field examination. The male was freshly dead and badly bitten on his underwings, thigh pits, wing pits, and face. The female was possibly a day dead and starting to get 'loose', but also badly bitten. We left both carcasses there.

Glen Haven Cliff, Glen Haven WI, Grant County

Date: 6/09/19

Amy rappelled down to find some feathers and half an uneaten eggshell in the nest, but no sign of young or adults. The landowners reported that they had been active about 2-1/2 weeks before we arrived but had not been seen or heard for about the last week. Based on what we found and what the landowner reported, at least one egg probably hatched here, but the site failed for unknown reasons.

Dairyland Power Genoa, Genoa WI, Vernon County

Peta and Marcelle laid four eggs, three of which hatched on May 4. Everything looked ready for a May 25th banding, but a raccoon climbed the elevator track and ate three hatchling falcons and the unhatched egg on a catwalk 400 feet above the ground.

We talked to raccoon expert Suzanne MacDonald, who told us that the raccoon was mostly likely a one-year old male out exploring, as opposed to a raccoon that climbed to get the falcons. That we know, we have never had this problem at a utility site before. We will take steps to prevent it if it continues to be a problem.

Xcel Energy Riverside Plant, Minneapolis MN, Hennepin County

There were two falcons here this spring. Riverside staff checked the box about once a week, but the falcons never laid eggs that we know. We were disappointed that the site appeared to fail completely with two falcons present, and we'll be watching the site closely next year.

411 Hamilton Building, Peoria IL

Jim Robison reported that two falcons were on site. He observed them copulating, making food transfers, and most likely incubating eggs. However, there were no eggs, eggshell fragments, or young when he went to check the box, and the adult falcons seemed to have disappeared. We don't know why this site failed.

Unknown and Unproductive Sites

Arcola Mills, MN

We visited Arcola Mills and talked with the landowners. Falcons did not attempt to nest here this year.

Castle Rock, Nelson WI

Bill Smith and Mark Blackburn reported a falcon visiting a possible nest site on April 19, but no falcons were seen in follow-up visits. We think the falcon they saw checking out the bluff ended up nesting at Bay State Milling just across the river.

Eagle Park Quarry, Dubuque IA

We put our scopes and binoculars on the wall but didn't see any falcons, so Dave rappelled down to check the hole we'd been told was most likely the eyrie. There was nothing in it – no shell, no scrape, and no prey remains. He descended further and found another hole with some old bones and dark pellets, but no sign of a scrape or young. Loose rock was a bit of an issue with all of the rain this year. A piece of sandstone calved from the wall and hit Dave as he was on his way up the rope.

Wyalusing Quarry, Wyalusing WI

Brett Mandernack and Bill both watched this site but, despite hours of observation, never saw any signs of nesting. Wyalusing has been disappointing. We put up a nest box in 2014. It has attracted falcons almost every year, but we have never had production here. The closest we came was in 2017, when two falcons hatched. Both hatchlings died within the first day. The carcasses were bitten by blackflies and soaking wet when we came to retrieve them, so we don't know why they died. If this box doesn't become productive, we will need to pull it down.

Greshik's Bluff, Fountain City WI

Amy saw one falcon defending the territory here this spring but did not see any falcons on subsequent visits. Doug Wood, who watches the bluff, did not see or hear falcons this spring. While the bluff looks like an excellent choice for a nest box, we have only had production here once.

Hole In The Wall Bluff, Fountain City WI

Amy and Bill both reported falcons here on multiple visits, but we don't know whether or not they nested.

Lynxville Complex and Monehen's Bluff, Lynxville WI

Sophia, Dave, Bill, and Mark all reported seeing falcons at the Lynxville complex and Monehen's Bluff in early spring. By late spring, all falcon activity was centered around Monehen's Bluff, but Dave, Amy, and John were not able to find eggs or young on rappel. Falcons were defending the bluff quite loudly, so we may have missed the eyrie or the eyrie could have failed with a few days of us arriving.

Trempealeau Bluff, Trempealeau WI

Bill, Mark, Jim Jenkins, and Doug Stratton all reported seeing falcons here, and Bill and Mark saw copulation on April 16. But we were never able to verify productive nesting and one of the landowners thinks that the site failed.

Lynn-Grant River Overhang, Potosi WI

Bill and Mark reported falcons here, but we don't know whether the site was productive.

De Soto Bay Bluff, De Soto WI

Bill Smith reported two falcons defending the bluff and the female with prey, but we don't know if they nested.

Bald Eagles

Decorah Bald Eagles



We believe that 2019 marked DM2's first year as a father. Mom accepted him as a mate in the fall of 2018 and he did most of the things that male bald eagles do – nestoration, copulation, food gifting, some incubation, brooding, and feeding and care of young. However, watchers pointed out that he seemed to lack experience. He brought fewer sticks in than Dad Decorah, didn't nestorate quite as much, seemed reluctant to copulate with Mom (leading to several instances of 'Mom on top'), didn't begin feeding young until three days after the first hatch, and had a harder time with feeding. He had a lot to learn – but learn he did!

Mom laid three eggs in pretty miserable weather, even for February in Iowa. Mom and DM2 would cover snow with a new layer of soft nesting materials just in time for another storm to hit and cover the nest with snow again. This may have been a factor in the first egg (laid on February 22) breaking on March 11. The remaining two eggs hatched on April 4 and April 7.

Nest-life proceeded nicely with only a few hiccups until late May, when the black flies made an appearance. The deep snow and extremely wet spring led to mega-hatches of the swarming, biting flies, which relentlessly tormented the eaglets and eventually drove them to abandon the nest on June 4 and June 5. D32 was 62 days of age and D33 was 60 days of age. Both were retrieved and taken to SOAR, although D32 received an emergency assessment and overnight care from Dr. Laura Johnson, a veterinarian and raptor rehabilitator who serves on the RRP Board. The eaglets were malnourished and anemic, and D32 had a broken tibiotarsus. As of this writing, D33 has been released while D32 is still in the care of SOAR.

DM2 vanished not long after the eaglets did, and a 4.5-year-old subadult showed up and started building a nest at the old N1 location. Why did DM2 vanish over the summer? We had a long conversation about that when the sub-adult eagle showed in mid-July. John pointed out that 2019 was probably his first year settling down, which

Bald Eagles

may have made him more inclined to wander. The early dispersal of D32 & D33 may also have affected him. Brett's research shows that eagles with no young to care for can get quite mobile within and beyond their established territory: not necessarily but wandering or expanding their area of use. Jim Grier added that eagles really differ in their behaviors, including fidelity to nest sites. Some individuals stay on their territories and some don't, and some moves result from competition, fighting, or what might be called mismatching personalities, while some eagles just seem to want to move. We're just glad he is back and very curious to see what happens next!

Watch the eagles at <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/decorah-eagles/> or <https://explore.org/livecams/raptor-resource-project/decorah-eagles>.

Egg Laying

Egg #1: February 22, 2019 @ 10:32 PM CT

Egg #2: February 26, 2019 @ 6:44 PM CT

Egg #3: March 2, 2019 @ 7:05 PM CT

The first egg broke on March 11.

Hatching

Hatch #1: April 4, 2019 @ 6:54 PM CT (D32)

Hatch #2: April 7, 2019, @ 7:19 PM CT (D33)

Camera/Mic cleaning, replacement, and upgrades

- September 9 – September 28

Nest Abandonment

D32 left the nest on June 4.

D33 left the nest on June 5.

Decorah North Eagles



There were two big changes at the North nest for the 2019 season. In August of 2018, the North nest fell. We replaced it with a starter nest in the same location in the fall of 2018. Mrs. North disappeared in the summer of 2018 and was replaced with female DNF, or Decorah North Female, who we believe was nesting for the first time.

Bald Eagles

It was really fascinating to be able to compare new mates at both Decorah nests and we saw similarities and some differences between DM2's first year as a mate and father, and DNF's first year as a mate and mother.

Like DM2, DNF was clearly learning as she went about instinctual activities like nest building, brooding, incubating, and caring for young. Unlike DM2, she was not 'shy' or (seemingly) reluctant to copulate with her mate. She also began feeding her lone eaglet within a day of hatch, although she lacked the deft technique of her more experienced mate and tended to feed larger chunks to her hatchling. DM2 waited three days to attempt his first feeding. We also saw her learning how to cope with heavy wind while brooding: flattening her body, sitting face first rather than crosswise or tail first, and carefully maneuvering around her eggs and eaglet to avoid accidental stumbles caused by wind or nest materials. Many of these behaviors are instinctual, but it takes practice to become good at them.

Both eggs hatched but only one eaglet survived. We don't know why DN10 died – we only got one tiny glimpse of it in the egg cup and it died within the first day of hatch. Mr. North was an excellent, attentive father and mate – brooding, providing food, chasing off intruders, and in general caring for his lone eaglet. Since DN9 didn't have any siblings, it was always fun to watch him interact with his parents, something all three appeared to enjoy.

Like the Decorah Eagles, DN9 abandoned the nest following a blackfly swarm. At 68 days old, she was a little closer to fledge than either of the Decorah eagles, but it was still early for her to be out of the nest. RRP Board member and master bander Dave Kester retrieved him and she was sent to SOAR. She was malnourished and anemic, but otherwise in fine shape. As of this writing, DN9 has been released.

Watch the eagles at <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/decorah-north-nest/> or <https://explore.org/livecams/raptor-resource-project/decorah-eagles-north-nest>

Egg Laying

Egg #1: February 21, 2019 @ 3:23 PM CT

Egg #2: February 24, 2019 @ 12:23 PM CT

Nest Abandonment

DN9 left the nest on June 6

Hatching

Hatch #1 March 31, 2019, confirmed @ 6:01 PM CT

Hatch #2: April 1, 2019, confirmed @ 6:32 PM CT

DN10 died within a day of hatching. We don't have a cause of death.

Camera/Mic cleaning, replacement, and upgrades

- September 9 – September 28

Bald Eagles

Xcel Energy Fort St. Vrain Eagles



We are very happy to report that the Fort St. Vrain eagles were successful this year! Based on what we could see of their bands, we have the same eagles we've had at this nest since about 2009. Ma FSV laid three eggs in mid-February and two of them hatched.

This nest is roughly 20 miles east of Colorado's Front Range. Although it tends to be sunny and dry, late winter and early spring can bring rain, ice, and heavy wet snow. Weather has caused complete nest failures and multiple eaglet deaths in five of the thirteen years we have records for. Thankfully, 2019 was sunny and dry and FSV39 and 40 both fledged successfully.

Some things about this nest are different than our two Decorah nests. All three are located by running water, but the Fort St. Vrain nest is located at the very edge of a rolling sand plain, which makes it much drier. Nest materials don't decompose nearly as quickly, leading to a lighter, drier nest with much less hummus in the bottom. Like our Iowa eagles, the Fort St. Vrain eagles eat a lot of fish, including sucker during spawning season and carp from the power plant's reservoir. But they also eat turtles and a lot of prairie dog. There is a prairie dog colony less than a mile from the nest, with excellent perching spots located almost directly above it. The prairie dogs are important

Bald Eagles

enough that the eagles suffered a food shortage when the colony was wiped out by flooding in 2013. They ate a lot of turtles in the late spring and early summer of that year.

Egg Laying

Egg #1: February 13, 2019 @ 8:40PM

Egg #2: February 17, 2019, between 1AM and 4AM

Egg #3: February 20, 2019, before daybreak

Fledge

Fledge began on June 11, 2019

Hatching

Hatch #1: FSV39 hatched March 25 @ 9:43PM MT

Hatch #2: FSV40 hatched March 26 @ 12:34PM MT

Camera/Mic cleaning, replacement, and upgrades

- August 21 – August 23

Watch the eagles at <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/xcel-energy-cams/> or at Xcel's site at http://birdcam.xcelenergy.com/cams/eagle_top.

Other Projects

Mississippi Flyway Cam

We installed a cam on the Mississippi River in August of 2018 with the help of volunteers from the Brice Prairie Conservation Association, staff from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and our friends and family. We watched the wonder of spring and fall migration, improved our duck identification skills, and were awed by the number and diversity of birds on the Flyway. We saw sandhill cranes, bald eagles, tundra swans, mallard ducks, wood ducks, northern pintails, American widgeon, gadwall, northern shovelers, Canada geese, ring-billed ducks, American pelicans, coot, common mergansers, canvasback ducks, golden-eye ducks, Caspian terns, peregrine falcons, and even a few American Avocets – a rare bird in this area!

We also got to keep the cam going! Lightning and high winds damaged equipment more than once. After high winds broke the solar panel bracket, leaving the panels hanging from one metal strap and our back-up webbing, we beefed up the solar panel brackets and added another arm. As of this writing, we've replaced solar panel brackets, cameras, microphones, radios, and power equipment. We really appreciate all the help from the Brice Prairie Conservation Association and the boat rental from Schafer's River Rentals.

Watch this site at <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/upper-mississippi-onalaska-cam/> or <https://explore.org/livecams/raptor-resource-project/mississippi-river-flyway-cam>



Other Projects

American Kestrel Cam

2019 marked the second year of our American Kestrel Cam with Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Neil Rettig and Laura. Five kestrels hatched and four survived to fledge.

Blackflies were a serious problem here, and even the fan we installed couldn't keep them away. Laura recommended that we try *Endure*, a fly spray used by some raptor rehabilitators to keep flies down in mews and pens. She and Neil treated the outside of the nest box to stop the flies from coming in. The Endure and the fan kept the flies at bay, although it was shocking how quickly they covered the little kestrels the one evening that we turned off the fan. We turned it back on as soon as they started coming into the box.

All four kestrels fledged successfully and the entire family could sometimes be seen on our outdoor cam. You can watch the kestrels here <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/american-kestrels/> and here: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/american-kestrels/>

Hawk Hill and Mississippi Ballard Banding Stations

2019 marked the third year of our Hawk Hill banding station in Decorah, IA. It was operated by master bander David Kester and assistant Sophia Landis, while Emily Neal from Luther's Sustainability Program worked with Luther College, Upper Iowa College, and local schools and homeschooling families to arrange field-based outreach opportunities and deliver environmental education. This year, 113 students from Luther College, Upper Iowa University, and a Decorah homeschool program visited the blind, four release programs were given to 100 students, and we hired five Luther College students to help trap 43 birds of prey from four species. Inclement weather – everything from heat to early snow! - had the station shut down for about ten days more than 2018, which affected our numbers. In addition the hawks listed here, we observed several massive communal migrations of broad-winged hawks, including 751 hawks from 10:00AM to 2:00PM on Wednesday, September 18.

Species	Hatch Year	After Hatch Year
Red-tailed Hawk	24	7
Cooper's Hawk	1	2
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	3	4
Merlin	2	0

We also started a new banding station over on the Mississippi River not far from Pike's Peak State Park, operated by master bander John Stravers. We were curious to see how a station on the mid-continent's greatest flyway would compare to one just 35 miles west of the river. The new station was staffed for 115 hours versus Hawk Hill's 440 hours and had fewer options for trapping birds, but station master John Stravers trapped 40 birds to Hawk Hill's 43 – a difference that reflects the station's close proximity to the Mississippi Flyway.

Species	Hatch Year	After Hatch Year
Red-tailed Hawk	27	3
Cooper's Hawk	6	1
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	1	0
Northern Goshawk	1	0
Peregrine Falcon	1	0

Get in Touch!



Dave Kester demonstrating handling technique



Sophia Landis releasing a Red-tailed Hawk

These stations have been valuable research, learning, and teaching tools. We hope to run both of them next year!

Get in Touch!

Want to learn more about us and/or get in touch?

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Non-profit ratings

Guidestar <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/41-1693761>

Great Non-Profits

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