

Raptor Resource Project 2008 Annual Banding Report

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2008 Raptor Resource Project Banding Report

2008 was a challenging year. Although we banded or attempted to band at 25 sites – 23 peregrine and two osprey nests – we saw reduced productivity, especially on river cliffs. The peregrines were almost certainly affected by very cold, snowy weather during the month of April, when they were incubating eggs. April snowfall records were shattered in west central, north central, and northeastern Minnesota communities, and mean temperatures were below historical averages for the entire month.

Based on site surveys and camera images, fewer eggs hatched and, of those, fewer young survived. Several usually productive sites yielded just one or two babies or failed entirely, including Cohasset, Maassen's bluff, the Lynxville cliff, and Lock and Dam 9. We also experienced rock fall that killed a young falcon and hit a climber, the near-severing of a rope at West Bluff, the almost total loss of the young at Greysolon Plaza, and the loss of Nora, the resident female at Blackdog.

However, we also saw some amazing successes. The new female at Blackdog hatched four young despite her nest box filling with snow in late April. We saw three new sites come on line this year – Greshik's Bluff, Shellhorn Bluff, and 3M, where we banded two babies and the adult female. Moreover, we saved one of the babies at Greysolon. Shaheen, named by a Hawk Ridge supporter, made an amazingly quick recovery after being dosed with Flagyl when we came to band him. Overall, we counted 16 babies on cliffs, 32 on power plant stacks, five on stackhouses, four on buildings, and two on a water tower, for a total of 59 young. We were not able to band the young falcons at West Bluff, since they nested in an inaccessible pothole roughly 12 feet under an overhang. We may try experimenting with some cams to see if we can safely get into this difficult site next year.

Although banding season is over, we still have work to do. We need to install or replace cameras and transmitters at several nest sites. We need to move the nest box at the Hibbard plant from the stack to a nearby roofline so the plant can carry out stack inspections without disturbing the nest or exposing workers to peregrine attacks. We are considering nest site improvements at several bluff locations, including the Alliant Lansing cliff, where we need to remove part of a ledge to prevent raccoons from accessing a nest site. Other cliff improvements might include adding substrate, installing nest boxes, enlarging eyries, and removing loose rock. We believe that the cold spring and late snow adversely affected the peregrine population this year, especially on the cliffs. Nest site improvements might help reduce these sorts of losses.

We are also involved with Tim Ellestad's efforts to carry out a cliff release of peregrines in Door County, Wisconsin. Door County was home to several pairs of cliff nesting peregrine falcons, referred to by Dan Berger as the Niagara Escarpment falcons, in J. Hickey's book *Peregrine Falcon Populations*. The falcons disappeared from the area in 1950. We plan to return them by obtaining baby falcons from utility sites in Wisconsin and releasing them from the cliff shown at right. If you would like to donate to this effort, please visit our website at <http://www.raptorresource.org> and look for the donate button.



We wrote the Raptor Resource Project's 2008 Banding Report with two purposes in mind: firstly, to provide formal banding data for collection and study; and secondly, to share our observations of the falcons and their nests with our members and friends. I would like to thank the many people who helped us this year by humping heavy and awkward gear to the tops of the cliffs, identifying falcons, tracking hatch

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dates, emailing pictures and observations, and helping with banding. As falcons proliferate up and down the river, we need more eyes looking for new sites and watching existing ones. You are a crucial part of what we do.

Each year we look forward to the return of the Gaboons to join us in banding on the lovely river cliffs. This year, Gaboon Dan Berger joined us. Dan rappelled down to get the young falcons at Homer Bluff, a spot he banded in 1952, right before the Peregrine falcon disappeared from the Mississippi River valley. We also welcomed back Joan Schnabel, Dot Karlson, Doug Wood, Gary Grunwald, Tim Jacobsen, George Howe and his family, Jeremy Anderson, and Maggie Jones. Gitta Ann von Roenn, an intern from Germany, joined us for the first time, as did Ben Ogden, a student at Winona State University, and Pamela Knetter.

Our climbing team this year was comprised of Bob Anderson, Dave Kester, Dan Berger, Amy Ries, and Joan Schnabel. Amy learned to band and bleed falcons and Joan rappelled for the first time at Greshik's Bluff in Fountain City. Falcons were seen at the Pepin Heights cliff just south of Lake City, Twin Bluffs in Nelson, Hussen's Bluff near Minnieska, MN, and Goose Island south of LaCrosse. We will be watching those sites closely next year!

Although we plan to concentrate on supporting and expanding the cliff-nesting peregrine falcon population, we need to recognize the role our utility partners played in returning the falcon to the Mississippi River. We pioneered the peregrine-utility program twenty years ago. It has resulted in hundreds of young falcons fledging in the mid-west. Power plant nestboxes – and a lot of hard work – played a key role in returning the Peregrine falcon to the Big River. Xcel Energy, Dairyland Power, Alliant, and other utility companies could have refused to help. Instead, they stepped up and made a real difference. The peregrine-utility program is very important to us and we intend to continue supporting it.

We hope you enjoy reading our report.

2008 Productive Nest Sites

5/22/08: Horizon Milling | Lake City, MN | Wabasha County

Lat/Long

N 44 26' 30.5"

W092 16' 18.0"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/g 29/A Lolo

Adult male: b/g K/U Gretch

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

First egg laid: 3/25/2008

First hatch: 5/03/2008

Female: 1687-02057 K/67 b/g Miley

Female: 1687-02058 K/68 b/g Ella

Male: 2206-47698 C/93 b/g Max

Male: 2206-47699 C/94 b/g Rex



Comments

Ben Ogden joined us for banding at Horizon Milling and Genoa this year. Ben, a student at Winona State, has prior experience banding Spotted Owls on the west coast. He commented that Lolo, the female here, defended her young much more aggressively than do Spotted Owl parents.

Gretch, the adult male, fledged from our Dairyland Power Genoa nestbox in 2000. Lolo, a granddaughter of Mae, fledged from our Xcel Energy Highbridge nestbox in 2001. The four young were named by Miss Fehrman's third grade class at Lake City's Bluffside elementary school.

Year falcons first nested here: 2002 | Total young fledged from this location (2008): 23

2008 Productive Nest Sites

5/28/08: Alliant Energy Lansing Plant | Lansing, IA | Allamakee County

Lat/Long

N 43 20' 13.0"

W 091 09' 58.1"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/g 54/E Fran (2003 Castle Rock hatch.)

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: unknown

Female: 1687-01989 K/74 b/g

Female: 1687-01990 K/75 b/g

Male: 2206-47700 14/N b/g

Comments:

This site has an interesting history. We first attracted falcons to a nest box on the stack catwalk. After two successful seasons, we mounted a nest box on a nearby cliff, also owned by Alliant Energy, and removed the stack nest box. The falcons succeeded in producing young for two seasons in the cliff nest box but, in 2003 and 2004, they moved off to a nearby ledge, laid eggs and hatched young, which they lost to raccoon predation. In 2005, we mounted a nest box back on the stack catwalk and the falcons fledged five young. In 2006, they moved back on to the cliff and once again, due to raccoon predation, failed to produce young. In early 2007, we installed another nest box on the cliff and closed access to the stack nest box. Unfortunately, the cliff site failed again. Alliant Energy gave us permission to re-open the stack box for 2008 and the falcons produced three young. However, we do need to get the falcons back on to the cliff so we are looking at ways to remove the ledge that allows raccoons egress to the nest box.



In 2000, peregrine falcons returned to the cliffs of the Mississippi river after an absence of over 35 years absence. Alliant Lansing was one of two cliffs to host returning pairs. Over the years, Alliant Energy has always supported our efforts to make this site productive. We appreciate their cooperation.

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 / Total young fledged from this location (2008): 17

2008 Productive Nest Sites

5/29/08: Dairyland Power Cooperative | Genoa, WI | Vernon County

Lat/Long

N 43 33' 33.8"
W 091 13' 56.3"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/r U/W Scooter
Adult male: b/g unknown

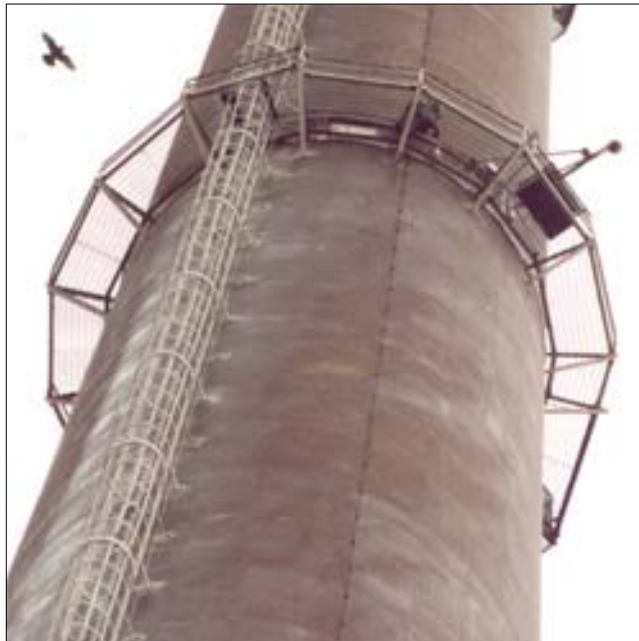
Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched
First egg laid: 4/01/2008
First hatch: 5/10/2008

Female: 1687-02059	K/76	b/g	PJ
Female: 1687-02060	K/77	b/g	Jessie
Female: 1687-02061	K/78	b/g	Redi
Male: 2206-72370	D/66	b/g	Nelson

Comments

It was a wet and rainy day. We put the four young falcons in the kennel and brought them down the stack to band. Dairyland Power employees watched and offered their own observations of the falcon family.



This is our most productive site: in the past ten years, the plant has produced an average of 3.7 falcons a year. Interestingly enough, Dairyland's Alma site, at an average of 3.6 falcons, is second.

Year falcons first nested here: 1998 | Total young fledged from this location (2008): 37

5/29/08: Alliant Energy Nelson Dewey Plant | Cassville, WI | Grant County

Lat/Long

N 42 43' 22.6"
W 091 00' 29.6"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown
Adult male: b/g G/V unnamed (1999 Dubuque hack)

Nesting Data

Female:	1687-21305	R/62	b/g	Electra
Female:	1687-21306	R/63	b/g	Power

Comments:

It was raining hard when we came to band here. We put the two young females in the kennel and brought them down the stack to band.

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 | Total young fledged from this location (2008): 21

2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/6/08: US Bank Building | La Crosse, WI | La Crosse County

Lat/Long

N 43 48' 48.6"

W 091 15' 10.0"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/g 43/C Majestic

Adult male: b/g C/80 Burt

Nesting Data

Male: 1126-06537 B/81 b/g Caleb

Male: 1126-06538 B/82 b/g Sam

Male: 1126-06539 B/83 b/g Clayton

Comments

This is a fun site, since you enter via a US Bank lobby and take a regular passenger elevator to gain roof access. The nestbox is mounted on the outside of the building, right below the roofline, and is reached by ladder from the inside wall. The falcons can be easily watched from the top of LaCrosse City Parking Garage right next door.

Bob Anderson, Dan Berger, Dave Kester, and Amy Ries banded here. We were joined by Henry Bauman of the Wisconsin DNR, a longtime peregrine enthusiast; Gitta Ann von Roenn, the Raptor Resource Project's intern; Joan Schnabel of Fountain City, WI, who has been training to join us on rope, and a group of interested bank employees and customers. We thought there was just one baby, and so were pleasantly surprised to find three. We named the babies after children and grandchildren of US Bank employees.

Mother Majestic fledged from the Colonnade building in Minneapolis in 2004; father Burt fledged from Castle Rock, just upstream, in 2005.

Year falcons first nested here: 2006 / Total young fledged from this location (2008): 9



2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/6/08: Homer Bluff (P-4) | Homer, Minnesota | Winona County

Lat/Long

N 44 01' 22.4"

W 091 34' 33.8"

Adult Data

Adults unknown

Nesting Data

Female: 1687-21307 R/64 b/g Esther

Female: 1687-21308 R/65 b/g Myrt

Female: 1687-21309 R/66 b/g Kay

Comments

This site became active just last year. Dan Berger banded the last young falcon on this cliff, which he called P-4, in 1952. Fifty-six years later, we got him back on the bluff. He and Dave Kester dropped down to get the young, which are located in a hole in a crack line roughly 15 feet from the top of the cliff. Given the (relatively) easy access to this eyrie, we are surprised that raccoon predation is not more of a problem. The three young were healthy, well fed, and loud.

Amy spent this year learning how to band and take blood. The aluminum bands are very stiff and do not bend easily, so it took her most of the season to get comfortable with them. Bob and Dave make it look much easier than it is.



Year falcons first nested here: 2007 | Total young fledged from this location (2008): 6

6/7/08: Maassen's Bluff | Buffalo County, WI

Lat/Long

N 44 22' 59.5"

W 091 57' 43.3"

Adult Data

Adults unknown

June 6th was rainy. We saw something that resembled a miniature tornado as we headed into Wabasha and at Maassen's Bluff rappelled down wet rock so slippery it felt coated in grease. Although the adults defended the bluff we were unable to find any young. We believe the nest failed.



Year falcons first nested here: 2001 | Total young fledged from this location (2008): 12

2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/7/08: Castle Rock Cliff | Trempealeau County, WI

Lat/Long

N 44 04' 73.3"

W091 33' 53.2"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: approximately 5/10/2008

Female: 1687-21343 R/20 b/g Madonna

Female: 1687-21344 R/21 b/g Sirocco

Male: 1126-06540 B/84 b/g Isaac

Male: 1126-06541 B/85 b/g Mac

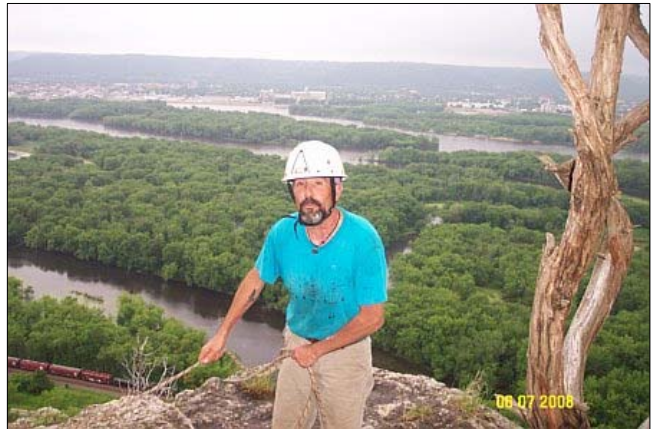
Comments

Despite all the storms, we successfully banded four feisty babies here. Castle Rock involves a long, difficult scramble up a steep hill covered in underbrush, vines, and loose soil. Dave and Amy rappelled to get the young falcons from the eyrie, which is located in a roomy hole under a sizeable overhang. While Bob, Joan Schnabel, and Dot Karlsen banded the young, the rappel team tucked in under the overhang and listened to peals of thunder echoing across the river valley. We had just pulled up rope when the skies opened, drenching the entire banding team. We were all soaked to the skin by the time we got down the hill.

Dot K blogged about her adventures – to read it, click the link below.

[Dot's banding blog](#)

Year falcons first nested here: 2002 / Total chicks fledged from this location (2008): 24



2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/8/08: Maiden Rock Cliff | Pepin County, WI

Lat/Long

N 44 30' 06.4"

W 092 17' 17.2"

Adult Data

Adult female: Unknown

Adult male: Gold band. May be Gunnar D/E

Nesting Data

Unknown number of eggs laid | 2 young hatched

First hatch: approximately 5/21/2008

Female: 1687-21310 R/22 b/g Winona

Comments

Maiden Rock was a busy site this year. We checked the eyrie on May 22; filmed it, with the help of a National Geographic crew, on May 31; and banded on June 8. The usual crew was accompanied by the West Wisconsin Land Trust, a birding bus led by project member John Dingley, Brenda and Tammy from Great River Energy, Julie (a friend of Dan Berger's), and several other people. Given the small goat prairie and precipitous drop, most of the viewers watched the banding from a scenic overlook just below the cliff. Dave and Amy dropped down to get the single baby and Bob banded her at the top. John's birding group named her Winona.

We were surprised that there was just one baby, since there had been two on May 22 and 31. Although we can't be sure, bad weather might have affected the nest – there was a great deal of rain and some very chilly weather the first week in June.

We believe that the gold-banded adult male is Gunnar, back after a year's absence. The Raptor Resource Project bred Gunnar in captivity, raised him in an artificial rock eyrie, and released him from our Effigy Mounds hack site in 1999. The story of the Effigy Mounds release can be read at our site:

Slideshow: <http://www.raptorresource.org/slide/slide1.htm>

1998 hack site report:

<http://www.raptorresource.org/pdf/98hackreport.pdf>

1999 hack site report:

<http://www.raptorresource.org/pdf/99hackreport.pdf>



Year falcons first nested here: 2001 / Total young fledged from this location (2008): 20

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6/8/08: West Bluff | Pepin County, WI

Lat/Long

N 44 31' 51.7"

W 092 17' 42.2"

Adult Data

Adults unknown

Nesting Data

3 young hatched

Dan and Sheila, the landowners, were again our very gracious hosts. They are thrilled to have falcons nesting on their land. They welcomed us with refreshments and accompanied us down to the top of the bluff.



The falcons chose a different pothole to nest in this year – one located at the juncture of the cliff wall and a roughly 12-foot overhang. Dave and Bob got on rope, and Dave rappelled down to the eyrie. He decided to try to swing into it – and almost made it, too. However, Bob noticed that Dave's rope had begun fraying quite severely. Dave's swing had rubbed the rope against the top of the bluff, causing it to begin sawing through. We called off the banding and Dave quickly came back up, using Bob's rope for most of the ascent.

We are looking into purchasing some cams for getting into difficult eyries. We will also be buying more rope protectors. None of us ever wants to see anything like this again.



Year falcons first nested here: 2005

Total young fledged from this location (2008): 9

6/9/2008 Gitta's Bluff | Waukon Junction | Allamakee County, IA

We had planned to band the three young falcons on Gitta's Bluff near Waukon Junction on Monday, June 9. After several days banding along the river, Bob and Dave returned to Decorah on Sunday evening, June 8. We had heard reports of flooding, but it was still a shock to wake up on Monday morning and learn that all the bridges spanning the Upper Iowa were closed. We had no choice but to call off the banding. Several Iowa cities experienced the worst flooding in their history. Even now, in Mid-July, hundreds of homes and businesses have yet to recover. The adult female here was identified as Jennifer *k/*W 2006 HY from Faith Bluff at John Latsch Park. The adult male is unbanded.

Year falcons first nested here: 2008

Total young fledged from this location (2008): 3

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6/10/08 Xcel Energy King Plant | Oak Park Heights, MN | Washington County

Lat/Long

N 45 01' 47.8"

W 092 46' 38.1"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/g W/E Belinda

Adult male: b/g W/36 Brent

Nesting Data

5 eggs laid | 2 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/11/2008

First hatch: 5/22/2008

Male: 1126-06542 B/86 b/g Ben

Male: 1126-06543 B/87 b/g Kirby



The nestbox here is mounted to a platform on a cat-walk 400' up the stack. Adult falcon W/E appeared to over-winter at this plant. New male Brent, a 2006 hatch from Faith Bluff, Winona, replaced Doug this spring.

This year marked the 20th year of the peregrine-utility program, which started at Xcel Energy's King Plant and has since spread worldwide. In 1988, an employee spotted a falcon and called in the Raptor Resource Project to confirm it. We installed a nest box. In 1989 Mae, a daughter of project-bred and released falcon MF-1, adopted it. She bred at the King plant until Belinda replaced her in 2004. The King plant, which is part of a monitoring project to determine the health of the peregrine falcon population following delisting, has an excellent history of producing young falcons.



Banding at the King plant is always fun. This year, a group of middle school students who are participating in an Xcel Energy mentorship program watched us band the falcons. They were very interested in and excited about the young falcons, who they named Kirby and Ben. The two males were about my favorite age – old enough to band, but young enough not to be much trouble.

More pictures and footage from the King plant banding, captured by Rebekah Ries, can be seen at our website:

<http://www.raptorresource.org/forum/index.php/topic,290.0.html>



Year falcons first nested here: 1989 / Total young fledged from this location (2008): 47

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6/11/08: Xcel Energy Prairie Island Plant | Goodhue County

Lat/Long

N 44 37' 17.6"

W 092 37' 58.2"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/r 7/1

Adult male: could not read bands.

Nesting Data

2 young hatched

Female: 1687-21311 R/23 b/g Tammy

Female: 1687-21312 R/24 b/g Madonna

Comments

Dan Berger, Bob, and Amy were joined by Excel employees Frank Sperlak and Mark Kenall on the U-1 containment dome, where they banded two healthy and very feisty young females.



The nestbox is located on the lip of the dome, which requires a rappel. Bob and Dan went down to get the babies – an especially nice treat for Dan, who is a big proponent of nuclear power. Although Amy had been learning to band, Bob took care of the babies here – a thunderstorm was rolling in, and we needed to get off the containment dome quickly. One of the babies nailed Bob twice, bloodying the back of his hand. When Dan and Amy got her feet under control, she bent over and hammered at his hand with her beak. If this one lives to adulthood, I think she'll be a real handful!

Adult female 7/1 fledged from the Montgomery Wards building in 1993, the last year it stood. At 15 years of age, she is the oldest female at any of our sites.

Frank Sperlak blogged about banding here – click the link below to read his account.

[Frank's Blog](#)

Year falcons first nested here: 1997 / Total young fledged from this location (2008): 35



2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/11/08: Red Wing Grain Stack House | Red Wing, MN | Goodhue County

Lat/Long

N 44 33 92 8

W 092 32 43 9

Adult Data

Adult female b/r *M/D Husker

Adult male: b/g

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 1 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/11/2008

First hatch: 5/22/2008

Female: 1687-21313 R/25 b/g Dakota



Comments

We first mounted the nestbox at this stack house to the wall of the stack down roughly 10' from the roof. We had to move it several years ago, during some construction, and opted to re-mount it on the leading edge of the roof. The nest box continues to provide a safe, attractive nesting site for falcons and is much easier to reach.

Once again, it was raining. Since there was just one baby, Bob quickly retrieved her from the box and we all took cover on the top floor of the stackhouse. This kept everyone, including the baby, nice and dry. Adult female Husker, fledged from the Woodman Tower in Nebraska, is a daughter of Zeus, released by the Raptor Resource Project in Rochester, New York. The banded male this year replaces an unbanded male from last year.

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 | Total young fledged from this location (2008): 19

6/11/08: Dairyland Power Cooperative | Alma, WI | Buffalo County

Lat/Long

N 44 18 52 1

W 091 54 61 3

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: un-banded

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: 5/19/2008

Female:	1687-21314	R/26	b/g	Tolini
Female:	1687-21315	R/27	b/g	Lila
Female:	1687-21316	R/28	b/g	Amy
Male:	1126-06544	B/88	b/g	Andrew

2008 Productive Nest Sites

Comments

Dairyland Alma was the first site falcons returned to in Western Wisconsin, after an absence of over 25 years. The falcons nested on the stack from 1997 through 2005, when they attempted to nest on 12-Mile Bluff, a large bluff located directly behind the plant. Their nest failed and they returned to the plant in 2006. However, they successfully fledged four young from 12-Mile Bluff in 2007. They bounced back and forth between the bluff and stack this spring before settling on the stack nest box.

The nestbox here is interesting. It is mounted to the sill of a light port roughly 400 feet up the stack and opens from the top, since the front is inaccessible. Before opening the box, you have to slot a piece of wood across the front. When the top opens, the front closes, which prevents babies from jumping out. You do have to be careful when returning them, however – it is essential that they stay away from the front, or they could jump out. Male Andrew was named after Scott Mehus's son. Both Scott and Andrew came to Alma this year.

Year falcons first nested here: 1997 / Total chicks fledged from this location (2008): 40.

6/12/08: Great River Energy Plant | Elk River, MN | Sherburne County

Lat/Long

N 45 17' 46.4"

W093 33' 28.8"

Adult Data

Adult female: unbanded

Adult male: unbanded

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/18/2008

First hatch: 5/25/2008

Female: 1687-21317 R/29 b/g Lightning

Male: 1126-06545 B/89 b/g Bullet

Male: 1126-06546 B/90 b/g Chase

Comments

Boy Scout Daniel Sundberg built the nestbox as his Eagle Scout project. He did an excellent job – the box was installed in 2006 and productive by the spring of 2007. Last year's female, 30/B, nested at Sherco this year, so the female here is new. Interestingly, 30/B tried nesting at Sherco last year, but moved to GRE after her box was destroyed by lightning.

This box is located on top of a turbine building, at



2008 Productive Nest Sites

the roofline, roughly 100 feet from the ground. Dan Berger and GRE employee Brenda Beauchaine went up to get the babies via bucket truck, which I think feels somewhat like riding on a ferris wheel. A local middle school class named the healthy, loudly protesting young.

Year falcons first nested here: 2007 / Total young fledged from this location (2008): 6

6/13/08: Greysolon Plaza | Duluth, MN | St. Louis County

Lat/Long

N 46 47' 23.0"

W 092 05' 43.0"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/g 82/C Amy

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

3 died (see comments)

Male: 2206-72371 H/02 b/g Shaheen

Comments

Four eyasses hatched here, but three of them died. Julie O'Conner, a naturalist who works for Hawk Ridge and closely follows the falcons, collected a dead baby and kept us updated on the health and status of the young falcons. Given her description and the rapid death of the young, Bob suspected Frounce, a disease carried by pigeons. He obtained Flagyl from Dr. Redig of the Raptor Center and treated the baby when we went up to band.

The nestbox here is located on a very small ledge just below the roofline. Amy hopped over the edge to get baby Shaheen, who was quite skinny and much less feisty than might be expected, given his age. Bob put the Flagyl in Shaheen's mouth, and eventually he swallowed it. I was surprised that he didn't try harder to expel it. We quickly banded and returned Shaheen, who made an excellent recovery and has now fledged. Baby Shaheen was named by auction winner and long-time Hawk Ridge supporter Andrew Longtin. Shaheen is a Persian word for falcon.



Hawk Ridge operates Peregrine Watch, a program that offers educational programs and an informal interpretation of the peregrine family's activities. Go to the Hawk Ridge website for more information or check out the Peregrine Watch website. Thanks to Michael Furtman for the peregrine photo.

Hawk Ridge: <http://www.hawkridge.org/>

PeregrineWatch: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/peregrinewatch/>

Year falcons first nested here: 2003 / Total young fledged from this location (2008): 15

2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/13/08: Minnesota Power Hibbard Plant | Duluth, MN | St. Louis County

Lat/Long

N 46 44' 08.6"

W 092 09' 06.7"

Adult Data

Adult female: b *Y/6 un-named

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

Female: 1687-21326 R/74 b/g Adele

Female: 1687-21327 R/75 b/g Emily

Comments

This was the first year for the Hibbard plant – although it attracted falcons last year, they failed to produce young. Female *Y/6 nested on the Bong Bridge prior to moving to the stack. We are not sure what prompted the move but are glad to have her in the nest box, especially given that young from under the Bong Bridge have a confirmed tendency to drown when fledging.

It was very, very windy when we went up to band. Bob and Amy went up the stack, while Dan and Ken Ries watched from below and identified the adult female. The nestbox is located on a stack catwalk roughly 75' above the roof of a power plant building. The plant frequently has to carry out stack inspections in May, when the paper plant it serves shuts down. We plan to move the nest box to a new location this summer.

Year falcons first nested here: 2008 / Total young fledged from this location (2008): 2

2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/14/08: Xcel Energy SHERCO Plant | Becker, MN | Sherburne County

Lat/Long

N 45 22' 84.0"

W 093 53' 87.1"

Adult Data

Adult female: bg 30/B

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

Female:	1687-21318	R/67	b/g	Joule
Female:	1687-21319	R/68	b/g	Kallie
Female:	1687-21320	R/69	b/g	Grace
Male:	2206-72031	D/67	b/g	Itasca



Comments

Eagle Scout Daniel Sundberg built a replacement nest box for this site since lightning destroyed the original. Female 30/B, who last year tried to nest at Sherco before moving to Great River Energy, returned. Xcel biologist Dan Orr and Brenda Beauchaine banded the young falcons here. Photographs courtesy of Brenda.

Year falcons first nested here: 1992 | Total chicks fledged from this location (2008): 42



2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/14/08: Greshik's Bluff | Fountain City, WI | Buffalo County

Lat/Long

N 44 08' 22.3"

W 091 43' 32.1"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

Female: 1687-21328 R/76 b/g Joe Senior

Male: 2206-72372 H/03 b/g Joe

Female: 1687-21329 R/77 b/g Joan



Comments

With the help of Fountain City resident and falcon enthusiast Doug Wood, we hung a nestbox on this cliff in 2006. The box attracted falcons in 2007, but they failed to nest. In 2008, the site came online.

It was a warm, sunny day – the first warm, sunny day on the bluffs this year. Bob and brand new team member Joan Schnabel rappelled down to get the falcons. Amy and Dave banded them at the top. The first falcon was banded female but was most likely a male, hence the name Joe Senior.

Year falcons first nested here: 2008

Total chicks fledged from this location (2008): 3



6/14/06: Xcel Energy Monticello Plant | Wright County, MN

Lat/Long

N 45 19' 98.0"

W 093 50' 84.8"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/r E/B Camilla

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

F 1687-21321 R/70 b/g Bella

F 1687-21322 R/71 b/g Donna

Comments

Dan Orr banded here. The nest box is located on an off-gas stack.

Year falcons first nested here: 1995 / Total chicks fledged from this location (2008): 43

2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/14/08: Shellhorn Bluff | Brownsville, MN | Houston County

Lat/Long

N 43 40' 00.3"

W 091 16' 40.5"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

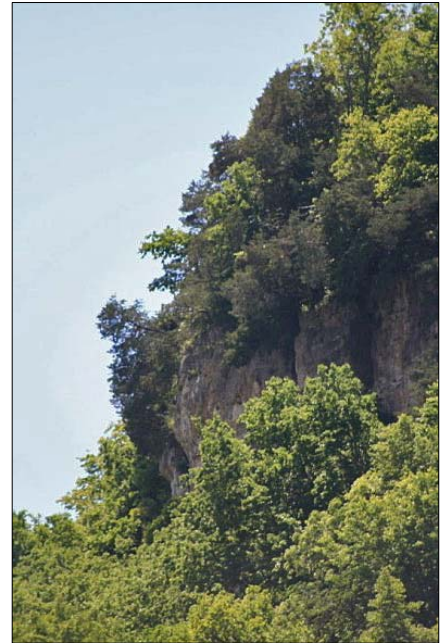
Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

Male 2206-72032 D/68 b/g Gordon

Comments

This was the first year for this site. The landowners, who were quite excited to band with us, met us and led us up a road to the top of the bluff. However, the day ended tragically. Dave and Pamela Knetter, who had trained with us on rope in January, rappelled down the cliff to band. There was a great deal of loose rock and Pamela's rope knocked some of it off the bluff. It hit her in the leg and killed an eyass that was out on the ledge. In the future, Dave and Bob will most likely handle banding here.



Year falcons first nested here: 2008 / Total chicks fledged from this location (2008): 1

6/14/08: Great Spirit Bluff | La Crescent, MN | Houston County

Lat/Long

N 43 52 15.2

W 091 19 12.2

Adult Data

Adult female: b/r unknown

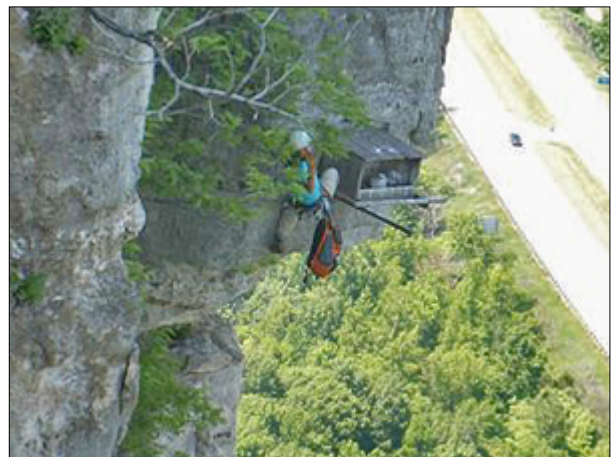
Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

Male: 2206-72033 D/69 Howie

Comments

Mississippi River Valley Conservancy member Tom Howe owns this bluff. He and his family are great supporters of our work and truly enjoy watching the falcons. They put on a very nice dinner to celebrate the banding. In addition to the regular banding team, we were joined by the Mississippi River Valley Conservancy, the Howe family, Project intern Gitte, Isaac Ries, Pamela Knetter, Joan, and several other Howe family members and friends. Dave and Bob rappelled down to get the little male and Amy returned him, earning a good footing in the process.



Year falcons first nested here: 2005

Total young fledged from this location (2008): 14

2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/23/08: Xcel Energy Blackdog Plant | Eagan, MN | Dakota County

Lat/Long

N 44 48' 38.8"

W093 14' 57.3"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/18/2008

First hatch: 6/1/2008

Female: 1687-02062	R/78	b/g	Pamela
Female: 1687-02063	R/79	b/g	Maggie
Female: 1687-02064	R/80	b/g	Alison
Male: 2206-72373	H/30	b/g	Jerm

Comments

Like the King Plant, this site is part of a monitoring project to determine the health of the peregrine falcon population following delisting. It was a difficult year here – there was fighting in the nest box on April 17 and snow on April 26. After the eggs failed to hatch by the anticipated 'due date', we started to wonder if they ever would. We were very happy – and somewhat surprised – when they did.

Bob, Bob's son Jeremy Anderson, Amy, and Pamela went up the stack to band the babies. This site has a 300' elevator ride, followed by a 300' climb to the nestbox, which is located on a small platform about 30' below the top of the stack.

Nora, the resident female here, was found dead on site earlier this year along with another female, also named Nora. We are not yet sure who replaced Nora.

Year falcons first nested here: 1993

Total young fledged from this location (2008): 42

BD FalconCam Thu Apr 17 18:46:51 2008



BD FalconCam Sat Apr 26 07:48:51 2008



BD FalconCam Sun Jun 1 09:58:51 2008



2008 Productive Nest Sites

6/23/08: 3M Facility | Langdon, MN | Washington County

Lat/Long

N 44 47" 24.1

W 092 54' 45.4"

Adult Data

Adult female: 1687-21325 R/35 b/g Betty Hawk

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

Female: 1687-02065 R/81 b/g Peggy

Female: 1687-02066 R/82 b/g Janelle

Comments

This was the first year for 3M's facility in Langdon. The falcons are nesting in a nest box we installed on the water tower in the fall of 2006. During our first trip to the nest, on June 12, the young were too young to band. However, Bob captured the unbanded adult female. 3M staff named her Betty Hawk in honor of the 3M Vice President responsible for the operation.

Bob, Jeremy, and Amy returned on 6/23 to band the young. We were met by 3M staff Bob Siegel and Russ Edmonds, who named the babies. Janelle is named after Russ's granddaughter and Peggy is named after Bob Siegel's late sister-in-law.

Year falcons first nested here: 2008

Total young fledged from this location (2008): 2



Unusual Incidents and Non-Productive Nest Sites

Lynxville Cliff

On 5/14/08, we checked the new eyrie where the falcons nested this year. We were very disappointed to find an empty pothole with raccoon scat. Male is 64/K, a 2002 hatch from Horizon Milling in Lake City.

Lock and Dam 9

This cliff attracted an adult female and immature male falcon this spring. For several weeks, the birds were clearly defending the cliff. However, they began to disappear for increasing periods and were seldom present at all by early May.

Xcel Energy Riverside

On 5/28/08, Mark Gerlach and Jeremy Anderson climbed 400' up the old Riverside stack to discover that 'Mabel', the resident sterile female, still owned the nest site. Once again, she failed to lay eggs. Xcel Energy plans to remove the Riverside stack to make way for a natural gas turbine some time this year. We will install a new nest box on one of the tall buildings overlooking the river.

Xcel Energy High Bridge

We removed the High Bridge stack nest box after the 2007 nesting season. Xcel Energy was converting from a coal facility to natural gas turbine operation, and planned to raze the stack some time in early 2008. We installed a replacement nest box on the nearby ADM stackhouse, but it appears that the falcons chose to nest under the nearby High Bridge instead.

Minnesota Power Cohasset Plant

The falcon at Minnesota Power's Cohasset plant laid her first egg on April 16th. She laid a second egg not long after, which broke. She laid a third egg on 4/23: a camera image captured that day shows her appearing to eat the broken egg prior to settling down for full incubation of the two remaining eggs.

A bad snowstorm on April 25 completely filled the box with snow. We lost the camera on May 15, not long before the eggs should have hatched. However, the staff at Minnesota Power did not report any young falcons. Based on what we know, we believe this site failed.



Unusual Incidents and Non-Productive Nest Sites

Falcon Sightings

- We spotted a pair of falcons at Pepin Heights cliff just south of Lake City. Although the landowner was very excited about the prospect of falcons on his bluff, they did not nest this year.
- Falcons were seen again at Twin Bluffs in Nelson. They bounced back and forth between the cliff and the Wabasha Bridge, but did not appear to nest in the area.
- We spotted a pair of falcons at Hussen's Bluff near Minnieska, MN. However, they failed to nest this year.
- Once again, falcons were spotted at Goose Island just south of LaCrosse. Although this cliff appears to provide an excellent nesting area, it appears to have been non-productive for yet another year. A Dairyland Power employee owns a home just below the bluff. He has promised to update us on any falcon activity.

Ospreys, Eagles, Owls, and Kestrels

The Raptor Resource Project is also involved in managing osprey, eagle, owl, and kestrel nests in Minnesota and Colorado.

Ospreys

Xcel Energy King Plant | Oak Park Heights, MN

The Ospreys are nesting on the barge unloader at Xcel Energy's King plant, not far from the falcons' stack. This nest has produced 40 young since Bob Anderson installed it on Earth Day of 1993, making it the most productive metro-area nest. Anderson recalls the installation:

"Just as I completed securing the nest frame and adding sticks, an adult male osprey began circling overhead with a stick in his talons. As soon as I vacated the area, he began nest improvement and attracted a mate. It made the hair on the back of my head stand up."



The Ospreys laid four eggs. Bob banded two babies here on July 11. He was joined by Dale Ulrich, Diane Gulbrandson, and another King plant employee. In addition to banding, the crew also replaced the camera.

Year ospreys first nested here: 1993 | Total young fledged from this location (2008): 40

Bayport Osprey Nest | Osprey Lane, Bayport | Washington County

Bob Anderson installed an osprey pole here to get the ospreys off a nearby power pole where they had previously nested. The crew used a pulley system and kennel to get the young ospreys from the nest.

Bob, Diane, and Bill banded three babies here on July 11. Diane reported that the babies were quite feisty!

Total young fledged in 2008: 3



Ospreys, Eagles, Owls, and Kestrels

Eagles

This year, the Raptor Resource Project monitored eagles at two sites – one in Colorado and one in Decorah, Iowa.

Xcel Energy Fort St. Vrain Plant | Platteville, CO

The Bald Eagles are nesting in a large cottonwood tree on the grounds of Xcel's Fort St. Vrain plant, near the juncture of the South Platte and St. Vrain rivers. Bob Anderson and Rob MacIntyre installed a popular wireless solar-powered dual web cam system here in 2003. Unfortunately, noise recently began interfering with signal transmission and the system was damaged in June by a thunderstorm. The cameras and transmitter will be replaced by next season. Many thanks to Jesse Brungardt and Joe Pinner, who are instrumental in running the cameras here.



The eagle laid her first egg on February 27. The first of three babies hatched on April 4. Note the turtle carapaces in the nest – the eagle family ate many turtles this year.

Total young fledged in 2008: 3. The Colorado Division of Wildlife decided not to band babies this year.

Decorah Fish Hatchery Nest | Decorah, IA

Bob and Gitta monitored and filmed Bald Eagles nesting in a cottonwood at a fish hatchery in Decorah, IA. They observed a great deal of interesting behavior, including the male incubating more often than expected, the eagles building and refining their nest some very interesting nest material (especially cornstalks), and the female almost blowing out of the nest after turning tail to the wind – and very nearly taking an eaglet with her.



Bob designed and installed this camera system – the first one he has done entirely on his own. The image quality is excellent and the system worked well. We plan to install similar systems in the future.

Total young fledged in 2008: 2

Ospreys, Eagles, Owls, and Kestrels

Owls

Bob installed two owl nestboxes at Xcel Energy's Valmont Station in Valmont, Colorado. One box attracted a family of Barn owls and the other attracted a family of Great Horned owls. Dave Madonna, of Xcel Energy, takes care of both nest boxes and cameras.

The Barn owl nest was not successful this year.

Great Horned Owls | Xcel Energy Valmont Station | Valmont, CO

In 2003, Anderson installed a nestbox and camera on a platform at the 260-foot level of the Valmont stack. It was quickly adopted by a pair of Great Horned owls and has been active ever since.

The owls arrived at their nest box in January of 2007. The female laid her first egg on February 6, followed up by a second on February 11. The first baby hatched on March 13 and the second on March 15.

This year's fledging was especially eventful. On May 2, the first owlet to leave the box was found inside the plant building. Employees rescued the bird and took it to the Birds of Prey Foundation to help ensure it would be OK. It was a bit malnourished, so it was nursed back to health before being released on plant property. The second owlet fledged on May 4. Both birds are doing well.



Total young fledged in 2008: 2

Kestrels

Xcel Energy Pawnee Station | Brush, CO

Bob Anderson installed a nestbox here in 2005. It was quickly adopted by a pair of kestrels. This year, they laid five eggs, all of which hatched beginning on May 3.

Ken Weisser maintains the kestrel camera and nest box. He has to clean both the box and camera after each nesting season, since the young kestrels squirt hawk chalk in all directions.



Total young fledged in 2008: 5

Web-Based Resources

Web-Based Resources

A number of people put together falcon photo albums or blogs this year. Following are some links. More will be posted at our website.

- [Dot's Photo Album](#)
(includes Maassen's Bluff and Castle Rock)
- [Julie O'Conner's PeregrineWatch Page](#) (Hawk Ridge, Duluth)
- [Raptor Resource Project's Banding Blog](#)
(includes photos and text about banding)

Many, many pictures may also be viewed in our forum

- [Raptor Resource Project Forum](#)

Bob, Dave, Neil Rettig, and Gitta collected footage for upcoming National Geographic movies at Maiden Rock, Gitta's Bluff, and the Decorah Bald eagle nest. We will post movie titles and dates on our website.