

Raptor Resource Project 2009 Annual Banding Report

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2009 Raptor Resource Project Banding Report

2009 was a difficult year for the Mississippi River cliffs. We lost seven established cliff sites, including two sites where peregrines were spotted copulating or defending cliffs, but failed to lay eggs; a site with addled eggs, but no young; a site where babies appeared to have hatched until the adult falcons abandoned the site, and three previously successful cliff nest sites where peregrines weren't seen at all. In addition to these failures, falcons were never seen, despite intensive monitoring, at five non-productive cliff sites where we regularly spot them.



We're not sure what happened. In southeastern Minnesota and southwestern Wisconsin, where the majority of losses occurred, average precipitation was slightly below normal and temperature normal during April and May (Minnesota Climatology Working Group), when peregrines are incubating eggs and caring for young. Furthermore, productivity at the cliffs where peregrines did nest successfully was higher this year than last year, which was cold and snowy: 2009 yielded an average of 3 babies per site at the cliffs we banded, as compared with an average of 2.25 for last year. Although cliff failures have occurred in other years – in 2006, only four cliff sites were productive – the number of established cliffs where peregrines either disappeared or were never seen at all is unprecedented. We've speculated that territorial fighting between falcons might be impacting nesting success, but that is only a speculation. We hope that this year was just an anomaly, but we'll be watching the cliffs closely next spring.

We also experienced a reduction in utility sites this year. Prairie Island and Genoa are the most notable failures. We found addled eggs at Prairie Island, and saw three peregrine falcons as we were leaving. The adult female here was later sent to the Raptor Center to be treated for Frounce. As of this writing, she has not yet been released. At Genoa, normally a successful site, a new adult female killed the nesting adult female and her young falcons.

Despite the difficulties, we had some great successes. We celebrated the 1000th falcon to fledge from a power plant at the Alan S. King plant this summer, added Bay State Milling to our list of productive sites, got into the West Bluff eyrie thanks to climber Ben Ogren, banded at three cliffs and one stack house on the same day, and saved the life of at least one young falcon when we dosed the Great River Energy nest with Spartrix. That was a long day for us – after Bob and Amy finished banding at the Minnesota Power and Light Plant in Cohasset, near Grand Rapids, they had to make it down to Elk River to meet Brenda Hoskyns and care for the GRE young. Overall, we banded 61 young: nine on stack houses, six on buildings, 25 on utility structures, 3 on a water tower, and 18 on cliffs. Despite the loss of six sites from 2008 to 2009, overall productivity was higher: two more young falcons were banded this year than last.

Although banding season is over, our work isn't done. We intend to install a nest box on Twin Bluffs in Nelson, WI, improve the eagle cam in Decorah, IA, remove the Blackdog nest and camera (this decision is discussed in detail later on in the report), and redesign the website. Bob is doing a great deal of research into cameras and transmitters, and has a number of interesting ideas for future webcams.

2009 Raptor Resource Project Banding Report

We wrote the Raptor Resource Project's 2009 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 dates, emailing pictures and observations, and helping with banding. We need more eyes looking for new sites and watching existing ones. You are a crucial part of what we do.

This year, we welcomed back Joan Schnabel, Nora Walkosz, Doug Wood, Gary Grunwald, Tim Jacobsen, George Howe and his family, John Thiel, Dan Orr, Brenda Hoskyns, Brett Mandernack, Chuck Bremer, Jim Larson, Helen, Darryl Councilman, Jim Carlson, Julie O'Conner, and Maggie Jones. Jaime Benshoff, a falconer from Minnesota, joined us for the first time, as did Maggie Lubinski, who installed the Bay State Milling nest box. Unfortunately, Dan Berger was not able to join us due to health reasons. We truly hope he can return next year.

Amy Ries would like to recognize the people on the forum, who are an invaluable source of information. Nora, Dot, Diane, AlisonL, LindaM, King Plant operator, grandmacarol, maple, joe, kittenface, and the rest of you, thank you so much for your postings, comments, and contacts. You guys keep me on my toes.

Our climbing team this year was comprised of Bob Anderson, Jeremy Anderson, Dave Kester, Amy Ries, and Ben Ogden. Jeremy Anderson rappelled on a cliff for the first time and Ben Ogden climbed into the eyrie at West Bluff. Everyone is looking forward to 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-one years ago, and celebrated the 1,000 baby to fledge from a utility stack this spring. 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.

2009 Productive Nest Sites

5/21/09: 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: 3/24/2009

First hatch: 5/02/2009

Female:	1687-21323	R/89	b/g	Milly
Female:	1687-21324	R/88	b/g	Feathers
Male:	2206-72034	H/31	b/g	Speedy
Male:	2206-72035	H/32	b/g	Razor



Comments

Joan Schnabel, Bob Anderson, Doug Wood, Amy Ries, and Jaime Benshoff, a Minnesota falconer, met at Horizon Milling to identify the adults and band the babies. 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. Lolo is a wonderful flyer and aggressively defends her territory from invaders like us. Fortunately, we can shelter under a rooftop Christmas decoration while banding. They were healthy, nice-looking falcons roughly 17 to 19 days of age – the perfect age to band.

Year falcons first nested here: 2002 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 27

5/28/09: 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

Number of eggs laid: unknown | 2 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: 5/08/2009

Female:	1678-02137	R/87	b/g	Deb
Male:	2206-72036	H/33	b/g	TommyHawk

2009 Productive Nest Sites

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, Dave Kester, Amy Ries, and Joan Schnabel banded here. Bob, Joan, and Dave went up to get the falcons, while Amy prepared the banding site. We needed to move fast, since we had to get to Cassville by early afternoon. The babies were quite lively – especially the male, who tried biting after footing failed.



A group of interested bank employees and customers gathered to watch us band the babies, who were named after two US Bank employees. The LaCrosse Tribune covered the story. Here's a link:

['Boom, they were gone': Peregrine falcon drama in Genoa shows nature isn't always pretty](#)

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 (2009):11

5/28/09: Alliant Energy Nelson Dewey Plant | Cassville, WI | Grant County

Lat/Long

N 42 43' 22.6"

W091 00' 29.6"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 2 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: 5/2/2009

Female: 1687-02139 R/86 b/g Jupiter

Male: 2206-72037 H/35 b/g Yogi

2009 Productive Nest Sites

Comments:

Bob Anderson, Amy Ries, and Brett Mandernack banded the babies on the stack this year. We were accompanied by Paul Lassance, an Alliant maintenance engineer. The male here is new, and not nearly as aggressive as the old male. Bob and Paul got the babies from the nest one at a time, Brett held them, and Amy banded them.

We banded right by the stack elevator, which meant we didn't have to worry about banding supplies falling through the catwalk grating and off the stack. Once again, these babies were the perfect age to band – old enough to be nicely robust, and young enough not to worry about bumping.

Alliant Energy personnel named the babies.

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 23

5/30/09: P17 (Great Spirit Bluff) | La Crescent, MN | Houston County

Lat/Long

N N43 52 15.2

W091 19 12.2

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: 5/10/2009

Female:	1687-21379	R/83	Laura
Female:	1687-21380	R/85	Sarah
Female:	1687-21381	R/85	Ming
Male:	2206-72038	H/04	Preston



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, Joan, Dave Kester's mother and children Leo and Ming, and several other Howe family members and friends.

The falcons here are nesting in a nestbox mounted on the cliff. Dave and Amy rappelled down to get the little falcons and Dave returned them to the nestbox. The babies were named after Howe children, with the exception of Ming, who was named after Dave's daughter. The children really enjoyed the little falcons and were full of questions and observations about them.

Year falcons first nested here: 2005

Total young fledged from this location (2009): 18

2009 Productive Nest Sites

6/2/09: 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 | 2 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/3/2009

First hatch: 5/14/2009

Female: 1687-21330 R/72 b/g Winger

Female: 1687-21331 R/73 b/g Willow



Comments

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. She is also very aggressive. Chuck Bremer, a plant employee who usually joins us for banding, did a wonderful job protecting us while we retrieved the babies from the nestbox. Unfortunately, he forgot to watch for her while he was counting the barges lined up at the plant. She nailed him, giving him quite a scratch on the head.

The falcons were named by children from a local school.

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 21

6/3/09 Xcel Energy King Plant | Oak Park Heights, MN | Washington County

Lat/Long

N 45 01' 47.8"

W092 46' 38.1"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/g W/E Belinda

Adult male: b/g W/36 Brent

Nesting Data

5 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/5/2009

First hatch: 5/17/2009

Female: 1687-21378 R/36 b/g Alex

Female: 1687-21335 *U/*W b/g Alida

Female: 1687-21336 *U/*V b/g Madison

2009 Productive Nest Sites

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. Brent, a 2006 hatch from Faith Bluff, Winona, returned in the spring.

This year marked the 1,000 peregrine to fledge from a utility nest box. The peregrine-utility program started at Xcel Energy's King Plant in 1988, when 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, Bob's sister Joyce Heille, a 4th grade school teacher at Falcon Heights Elementary school, has her class following the falcons. The class got to attend the banding, and take a tour of the power plant afterwards. They were very enthusiastic about both activities.

The babies were named by Mary Lewis, an Xcel Energy employee. She won naming rights at an Xcel Energy auction supporting United Way. The falcons were named after her nieces and nephew.

We were a little worried about the age of the youngest falcon, which was just 13 days old. Bob decided that he would collect all the falcons from the nestbox, but not band the youngest one if it was too small. However, the falcon was big enough to sex and band. Another great year for the King Plant!

Here are a few links to stories about the King banding:

- Star Tribune: <http://www.startribune.com/local/48006962.html>
- KSTP: <http://kstp.com/news/stories/S957064.shtml?cat=206>

Banders were Bob Anderson, Dan Orr, Amy Ries, and Bob's son Jeremy Anderson.

Year falcons first nested here: 1989 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 50

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6/3/09: 3M Facility | Langdon, MN | Washington County

Lat/Long

N 44 47" 24.1

W 092 54' 45.4"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: Charlie 2206-69868

Nesting Data

Unknown number of eggs laid | 3 hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: unknown

Female:	1687-21332	*U/*R b/g	Bubbles
Female:	1687-21333	*U/*S b/g	Bonne
Male:	2206-72040	H/05 b/g	Bubba

**Comments**

Bob, Jeremy, and Amy banded the babies on a bright, sunny afternoon. The male is a 2003 hatch from Horizon Milling in Lake City. He tried nesting in Hastings, MN in 2006.

Year falcons first nested here: 2008

Total young fledged from this location (2009): 5

6/5/09: P5 (Lynxville Bluff) | Lynxville, WI | Crawford County

Lat/Long

N 43 17" 08.8

W 091 02' 58.4"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

Unknown number of eggs laid | 1 eyass in nest

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: 5/7/2009

Female:	1687-21338	*U/*Y b/g	Rebekah
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**Comments**

Joan Schnabel, Nora, Helen Harvey, Doug Wood, Brett Mandernack, and several others joined us on Friday for what was to be a long weekend of cliff banding, until Saturday and Sunday were rained out. We had a hard time finding the Lynxville eyrie from the top, which is very thickly overgrown. Doug Wood was on ground team, and he didn't see us until Dave clambered out onto a ledge and waved. Next year, we're going to use trekking poles. The poles can help us hike rough terrain and, lashed together and

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fit with a bandana, will hopefully rise above thick undergrowth to let the ground team know where we are.

The falcons nested very low on the cliff this year, and the rock over which Dave and Bob rappelled was quite loose, so they banded at the eyrie and went off rope at the bottom instead of climbing back up. The lone baby was named after Amy's daughter Rebekah.

This cliff is recorded as P5 in Dan Berger's notes of the historical nesting population in J. Hickey's book, Peregrine Falcon Populations. Young falcons were confirmed in 1952 and adult falcons present in 1953, 1954, and 1956.

Year falcons first nested here: 2003 | Total chicks fledged from this location (2009): 11

6/5/09: P15 (Lansing Bluff) | Lansing, IA | Allamakee County

Lat/Long

N 43 20" 04.2

W 091 09' 49.6"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: banded

Nesting Data

Unknown number of eggs laid | 3 hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: 5/7/2009



Female:	1687-02089	*U/*X b/g	Amei
Female:	1687-02090	*U/*U b/g	Becah
Male:	2206-72039	H/07 b/g	PF Flyer

Comments

Like the King plant, Lansing is part of a monitoring project to determine the health of the peregrine falcon population following delisting.

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



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stack box for 2008 and the falcons produced three young. Bob removed the nestbox once the season was over, and we waited to see what the falcons would do. Fortunately, they chose a cliff nestbox this year, although it was the older of the two on that particular cliff. It was safe from raccoons and most humans, given the abundance of poison ivy on the bluff. Bob's son Jeremy is immune to poison ivy, but Bob and Amy got a whopping case of it.

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.

Nora, aka Country Lass, took some wonderful pictures. They can be found here:

http://www.kodakgallery.com/adventures-of-nandj/main/june_5_2009_-_cliff_bandings

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 20

6/9/09: P10 (West Bluff) | Pepin County, WI

Lat/Long

N 44 31' 51.7"

W 092 17' 42.2"

Adult Data

Adults unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: 5/13/2009



Female:	1687-21339	*U/*K	b/g	Swisher
Female:	1687-21340	*U/*M	b/g	Maiden
Female:	1687-21341	*U/*P	b/g	Sarah
Male:	2206-72374	H/17	b/g	Kevin

Dan and Sheila, the landowners, were again our very gracious hosts. They were looking forward to having the birds banded on Saturday. Unfortunately, we had to return Tuesday following Saturday's rainout. This would be a busy day for us, since we had three cliffs and one stackhouse to band at.

The falcons here are nesting in a pothole just below a large overhang. Last year, we had to scrub the banding when Dave Kester nearly severed his rope trying to swing into it. This year, we returned with Ben Ogden, a climber who helped with the training at Prairie Walls climbing gym in Rochester last winter. The following account of the banding is taken from our blog at <http://www.raptorresource.org/blog/blog.html>.

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... We started right in with West Bluff. Ben Ogren, Bob, and I looked at West from down at the bottom. Ben decided he would rappel down and climb into the eyrie. I would drop with him, get him the kennel, and provide whatever support I could. Let me explain something for any climbers that might be reading this - we weren't rigging for climbing on a dynamic rope, but for rappelling and working on a static rope. For you nonclimbers, the shock of a fall on static line is taken by your body and anchor, not the rope. Static falls can break bones, severely damage tissue, and break or rip out gear and anchors. It was critical that Ben avoid falling.



We got up to the top and I dropped to age the babies. Just as I got under the overhang, Bob said, "Oh, by the way, that's the spot where Dave almost severed his rope last year, so be careful." I avoided a clever response, rappelled down to the eyrie to age the babies, and kicked back to watch the Ben Ogren show.

Ben got over the edge just fine (he's experienced), but had a brief moment of losing it when he got into position for climbing over to the eyrie. Our look from below completely failed to convey the sketchiness of our placement, the sheer and utter crappiness of the loosest, most brittle rock imaginable, and the lodging of Ben's rock in a large crack that was filled with sharp edges. "How hasn't one of you died!?" Ben yelled. I yelled back something encouraging about how badly the rock sucked, and Ben asked me to tell him whether or not his foot placements were good as he eased across a narrow ledge into the eyrie. I gave him feet and hand suggestions while he climbed, managed the rope and got into the eyrie. Out of the fire and into the frying pan: I lowered the kennel, he filled it with four lustily vocalizing, footing baby monsters (peregrines), and up the bluff they went.

West is beautiful. It looks north towards the mouth of Lake Pepin. We were about the tallest thing around, and you could see the river valley for miles. The eyrie was large and well protected by an overhang, so the babies were safe from weather, raccoons, and (judging by the whitewash and their overall health) starvation. We found blue jay remains and spotted the



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head of a black bird about 5 feet below us. Blue jay remains showed up at several sites this year.

Bob and Jeremy banded the young falcons and I lowered the kennel down, using my height (I was hanging in air about 12 to 15 feet above him), to gently swing the kennel over. He grabbed it, used a daisy chain to back it up to his harness, and was again repeatedly footed while getting the babies back into the eyrie. Up we went. I had to work my way out from under a very large overhang, on gear only, while Ben had to climb back out of the eyrie and carefully take up rope until he could swing out without falling. It was quite an adventure...

My notes from last year mentioned that we were going to pick up more equipment. We are currently using Bluewater II static caving line, which is quite robust. Next year, we need to use rope protectors as well. Ben's use of the daisy chain to back the kennel up was an excellent idea, so our next banding equipment purchase will probably be a Personal Anchor System.

Year falcons first nested here: 2005

Total young fledged from this location (2009): 13

6/09/09: P11 (Maiden Rock Cliff) | Pepin County, WI

Lat/Long

N 44 30' 06.4"

W 092 17' 17.2"

Adult Data

Adult female: Unknown immature

Adult male: Gunnar D/E

Nesting Data

Unknown number of eggs laid | 2 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: 5/16/2009

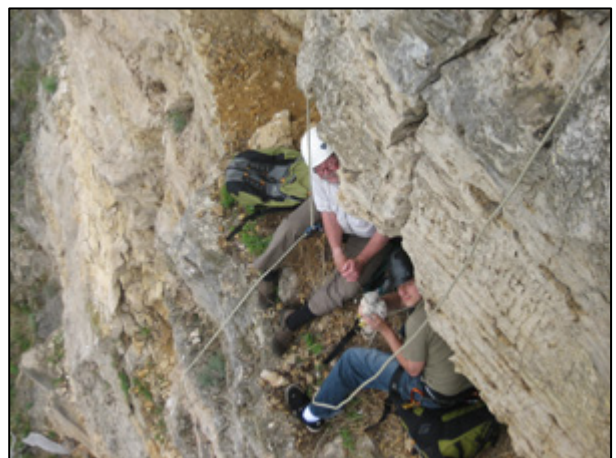
Female: 1687-30282 B/R b/r Juliet

Male: 2206-72375 H/12 b/g Pepin

Comments

We switched to black/red bands on the female at this eyrie, where we were joined by representatives from the West Wisconsin Land Trust, who purchased the cliff in 2004. The account below is taken from our blog...

You know you've been to a lot of falcon bandings when everyone ignores the banders to take pictures of the rattlesnake sunning itself just 40 feet from the drop spot. Of course, the snake was as thick as a baseball bat. Then again, you know you're in a crowd of nature enthusiasts when one person yells "Rattlesnake!", and everyone else runs toward him.



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The eyrie is roughly in the middle of the bluff this year, not on the point. Bob was excited about his 100th rappel on river cliffs here - and a little worried about disturbing baseball-bat sized rattlesnakes after Ben spotted one. Bob and Jeremy celebrated his 100th rappel together with a first-ever father-son banding on the cliff - Bob thought the rock was a little too loose to haul the babies up, and there was a bit of an overhang there as well. Bob and Jeremy banded two healthy young falcons at Maiden Rock...

The new female here is an unidentified immature. 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 (2009): 22

6/09/09: 12-Mile Bluff | Alma, Wisconsin | Buffalo County

Lat/Long

N 44 18' 32.8"

W 091 54' 24.4"

Adult Data

Adults unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

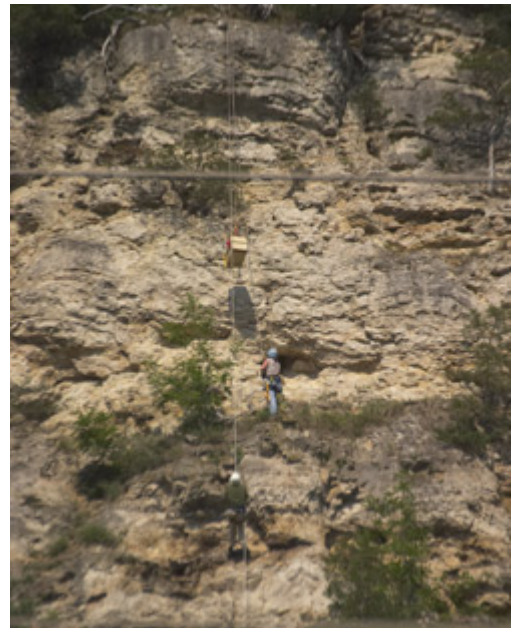
First hatch: 5/14/2009

Female	1687-30283	83/D	b/r	Alma
Female	1687-30284	84/D	b/r	Ermute
Male	2206-72367	H/13	b/g	Berger
Male	2206-72377	H/14	b/g	Ogden

Comments

The peregrines here nested on the cliff for the first time in 2007. They returned to the power plant in 2008, but were back on the cliff in 2009. Although the eyrie doesn't offer much protection from the sun, it offers wonderful protection from rock fall, washout, and raccoons, as mentioned in this account from our blog...

We pulled up gear and headed for 12-Mile bluff, a big crumbly bluff behind the Alma power plant. They were nesting in the exact same spot they nested two years ago - a hole way down the wall, almost even with the tree line. I climbed through the dead snag from hell, tossed all the loose rock I could see from the top of the bluff, and rappelled through a cedar tree down to the first terrace, where I sheltered under an overhang until Jeremy joined me. I went down another eight to ten feet to get the



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babies. There were four healthy youngsters in a small hole sheltered by an overhang. Had the parents nested on the ledge above, the babies would have been eaten by raccoons - there was raccoon poop all over! They were safe and well fed here, however. The prey remains were well picked over and not real obvious to me, but I believe I saw some warbler remains, judging by the size of the feet and the cliff's location on river bottom land.

Bob got the kennel up through the cedar tree and the snag. They quickly banded the babies and dropped them back. The young falcons footed me, but I got them into the eyrie, and Jeremy and I headed down the cliff and on to the talus. As nasty as that was, neither one of us was interested in climbing back up through the cedar snag. This bluff also has a lot of loose rock, which poses a very real danger to humans and young falcons alike. The fewer disturbances, the better!

Year falcons first nested here: 1997 | Total chicks fledged from this location – plant + bluff (2009): 44

6/09/09: Bay State Milling | Winona, Minnesota | Winona County

Lat/Long

N 44 03' 09.4"

W 091 37' 47.5"

Adult Data

Female: 43/D Chicklet

Male: unknown

Nesting Data

Unknown number of eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First hatch: 5/13/2009

Female	1687-30285	85/D	b/r	Maggie
Female	1687-30286	86/D	b/r	Anne
Male	2206-72378	H/15	b/g	Ricker

Comments

This is a new site for us. About 10 years ago, a girl named Maggie Lubinski put a nestbox on the roof of Bay, where her father works, as part of a 4-H project. The box sat mostly empty until this year, when two falcons nested there. The adult female is Chicklet, a 2005 hatch from Dairyland Power Genoa. We don't know who the male is yet.

There was a great deal of excitement at the plant when we arrived – it seemed like everyone had gathered to watch us band.



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The Winona Daily News has a nice story about it here:

- Winona Daily News Article:
<http://www.winonadailynews.com/articles/2009/06/10/news/05raptors0610.txt>

Year falcons first nested here: 2009 | Total chicks fledged from this location (2009): 3.

6/09/09: Great River Energy Plant | Elk River, MN | Sherburne County

Lat/Long

N 45 17' 46.4"

W 093 33' 28.8"

Adult Data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/9/2009

First hatch: 5/18/2009



Male	816-38651	D/70	b/g	Roger
Male	816-38652	D/87	b/g	Royal
Male	816-38653	D/88	b/g	Edward
Female	1687-30272	74/D	b/r	Bella (died 6/17/09)

Comments

This 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. He did an excellent job – the box was installed in 2006 and productive by the spring of 2007. Two adult females showed up at the nest box this year. In the early morning of 3/17/09, a 10-minute fight took place in the nest box between the possible 2008 unbanded female, and the 2007 banded 30/B female. The unbanded female won rights to the nest box. 30/B went back to the Sherco plant, where she nested last year.

Bob came to the Elk River Station and gave a presentation and talked to the students from the Rogers Middle School After School Environmental Explorers. They followed the progress of the ERS falcon family, named the young eyasses, and attended the banding. Banders were Dan Orr and Brenda Hoskyns, a GRE employee who follows the falcons very closely. Unfortunately, falcon Bella died after contracting Frounce. I've got some information published on our blog:

- <http://www.raptorresource.org/blog/2009/06/as-our-readers-know-falcon-bella-died.html>

Brenda Hoskyns went to the Raptor Center and got some Spartrix. We met at Great River Energy on 6/19 and went up to the nest. Brenda got some water to help the young falcons get the pills down, which worked very well. Bob got the falcons and Brenda and I held them while he dosed them with the Spartrix. One of them had large frounce lesions in its mouth, but as of this writing, all three are doing well.

Year falcons first nested here: 2007 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 9

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6/09/09: 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 | 3 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/8/2009

First hatch: 5/17/2009

Female: 1687-30273 72/D b/r Sherfire

Male: 816-38655 D/90 b/g Wander

Male: 816-38654 D/89 b/g Breaker

**Comments**

Cornell University has linked to the birdcam at this site. Female 30/B was back for another year. 30/B is a rehabbed bird who was brought into the Raptor Center with a head injury. She was treated, banded and released from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN in 2002. She lost a fight for the GRE nestbox before settling here.

Xcel biologist Dan Orr and Brenda Hoskyns banded the young falcons here.

Year falcons first nested here: 1992 | Total chicks fledged from this location (2009): 45

6/11/09: 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

? eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: 5/22/2009

Female: 1687-30289 89/D b/r Shock

Male: 2206-72381 H/22 b/g Kael

Male: 2206-72382 H/23 b/g Screech

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Comments

Jeremy Anderson and Amy Ries went up the stack to band here. The babies were healthy and the parents not very aggressive. Banding went well. The female here is a 2003 hatch from Caribou Island in Canada.

Year falcons first nested here: 2008 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 5

6/11/09: 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

Female: 1687-30287 87/D b/r Brittne

Female: 1687-30288 88/D b/r Mariah

Male: 2206-72379 H/20 b/g Zinger

Male: 2206-72380 H/21 b/g Alex



Comments

I had initially planned to publish an upbeat account of the banding from our blog. However, the young falcon Mariah was found with a wing injury and taken to the Raptor Center. She was released back up in Duluth on July 26 and, as of this writing, appears to have made a successful transition back into the wild. Alex H/21 was found dead, as was H/20 Zinger. Julie O'Conner of Hawk Ridge had this to say:



This is a stark reminder that these birds are living in the harsh reality of nature, even though their lives seems pretty 'docile' in downtown Duluth. Even though this news isn't good, I wouldn't trade the joy of watching falcons LIVE for anything! Keep posting Brittne sightings... they become more important every day!!

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/>

Michael Furtman: <http://www.michaelfurtman.com/>

Year falcons first nested here: 2003 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 19

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6/11/09: Xcel Energy Blackdog Plant | Eagan, MN | Dakota County

Lat/Long

N 44 48' 38.8"

W093 14' 57.3"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/g 30D Mandy Rose

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/12/2009

First hatch: 5/22/2009



Female: 1687-30290 90/D b/r	Gracie
Female: 1687-30291 91/D b/r	Rosalina
Male: 2206-72383 H/24 b/g	Gandalf
Male: 2206-72384 H/25 b/g	Gabba-Gabba

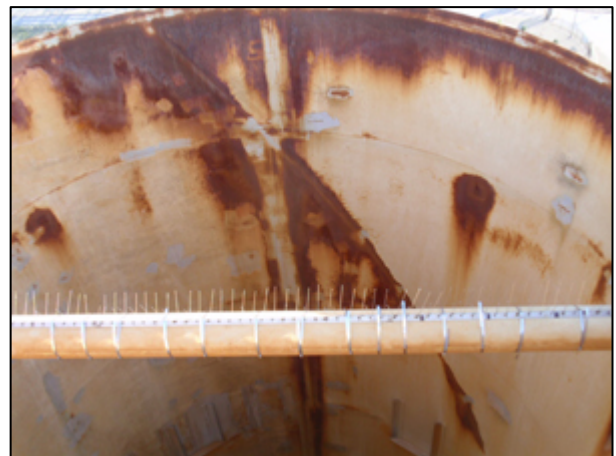
Comments

Like the King and Lansing sites, Blackdog is part of a monitoring project to determine the health of the peregrine falcon population following delisting. Last year, the plant made an unfortunate discovery. Some dead falcons were found in the natural gas stack immediately adjacent to the coal stack on which the nestbox is placed.

There was a great deal of discussion about why the deaths occurred and what to do about it. The natural gas stack is not always on line, and when it is, the emissions aren't hot, so we knew the falcons weren't flying over and being singed so they couldn't fly, or burned to death. Furthermore, the stack aperture is pretty small, so it seems unlikely that a falcon would fly over it, be overcome, and fall straight down into it. All the dead falcons were found inside the stack.

We finally decided that the falcons were most likely perching on the stack and falling in, although we didn't know whether or not any emissions from the stack played a role in their deaths. It is possible that they could have been overcome when the stack began to emit, and tumbled in. However, that no birds were found outside the stack seems to suggest that emissions did not play a role – after all, an unconscious bird could have as easily tumbled backward as forward. It is also possible that they could have lost their grip or, in the case of the young falcons, been jostling one another and fallen in. The stack is so narrow that they would not have been able to escape it.

Xcel Energy decided to install spikes to discourage falcons (and other birds) from perching on the stack. Since the top of the stack was unreachable by ladder



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or elevator, they used a crane to hoist a worker 230 feet into the air. He welded the spikes on the top and on a bar across the hole. Unfortunately, our plan didn't work. In late July, a plant employee entered the stack and found a dead falcon and a live falcon. He was able to release the live falcon.

Bob believes that the falcons may be chasing smaller birds, such as swifts, into the natural gas stack. The smaller birds are able to escape, but the falcons are not. Given the risk to the falcons, we have decided to pull the box. We appreciate Xcel's efforts to try to make the stack safer for falcons, and regret that it didn't work.

Banders this year were Bob Anderson, Jeremy Anderson, and Amy Ries. Mandy Rose, the new female here, is a 2004 hatch from the Xcel Energy Monticello plant.

Year falcons first nested here: 1993 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 46

6/18/09: Xcel Energy Monticello Plant | Monticello, MN | Wright County

Lat/Long

N 45 19' 98.0"

W093 50' 84.8"

Adult Data

Adult female: b/r E/B Camilla

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

Unknown number of eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg laid: unknown

First hatch: estimated 5/20/2009



Female: 1687-30274 73/D b/r Xcella DeVille

Male: 816-38656 H/34 b/g Sawatzke

Male: 816-38657 H/36 b/g Myrabo

Comments

Dan Orr banded the young falcons here. Mother Camilla has nested here since 1996, which makes her one of the older falcons at the sites we band.

Year falcons first nested here: 1995 | Total chicks fledged from this location (2009): 46

2009 Productive Nest Sites

6/18/09: Minnesota Power and Light | Cohasset, MN | Itasca County

Lat/Long

N 47 15 35 8

W 093 39 12 2

Adult Data

Adult female and male are both unbanded.

Nesting Data

4 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg laid: 4/16/2009

First hatch: 6/01/2009

Female:	1687-02096	b/r 70/D	Liberty
Male:	2206-72399	b/g H/26	Freedom
Male:	2206-72393	b/g H/27	Justice



Comments

Bob Anderson and Amy Ries banded here on the morning of 6/18. The weather was cool and cloudy – perfect for banding! We were joined by plant employees Daryl Councilman and Jim “Swede” Carlson, who have been very active in the peregrine program here and at other MPL facilities. In addition to supporting the peregrines at the Cohasset plant, Jim built nestboxes for the Hibbard plant and the Laskin Center in Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota, which has been added to the list of sites we’ll be monitoring next year.

The falcon nest box is mounted to a catwalk about 275’ up the stack – unlike many of the electric utility sites we manage, banding here entails a long ladder climb! The female gave Bob a good thump on the head just before we went down the ladder – fortunately, he had a helmet on.

Year falcons first nested here: 1993 | Total chicks fledged from this location (2009): 49

Unusual Incidents and Non-Productive Nest Sites

Maassen's Bluff, Buffalo County, WI

Falcons were observed at Maassen's Bluff by Bob Anderson, Gary Grunewald, and Amy Ries. The pair appeared to be feeding babies in early June when they suddenly stopped. No falcons were witnessed after early June. We are not sure why the site failed.

Greshik's Bluff, Fountain City, Buffalo County, WI

Doug Wood confirmed two adult falcons on this cliff. However, no falcons took up residence in the nestbox. On several occasions, Bob Anderson spotted a tiercel defending the cliff, but the tiercel failed to attract a mate.

P16 (Castle Rock Cliff), Trempealeau County, WI

Amy Ries observed falcons copulating near the eyrie in March. However, they disappeared not long after that and were not seen again. This is only the second time this site has been non-productive since falcons began nesting here in 2002, producing a total of 21 babies.

P19 (Leo's Bluff), Waukon Junction, Allamakee County, IA

Last year's female, *K/*W, was spotted here by Bob Anderson and Pat Schlarbaum in late March. When we returned to band on 6/05, we found an addled egg, but no young falcons.

Xcel Energy Prairie Island Plant, Goodhue County, MN

We found nothing but addled eggs in the nestbox. However, while leaving, we observed three peregrine falcons on site. The female was later found with a large frounce lesion in her mouth. As of this writing, she is still at the Raptor Center.

Dairyland Power Cooperative, Vernon County, WI

Scooter and her mate returned in early May, copulated, and laid eggs, which hatched. However, over the weekend of May 17th, the babies and mother Scooter disappeared. They were most likely killed by S/27, a female who hatched from American Republic in 2007.

Agri-Bunge Stackhouse, McGregor, IA

The falcon here incubated eggs, but none of them hatched.

Unusual Incidents and Non-Productive Nest Sites

Falcon Sightings

- We spotted a tiercel at Hussen's Bluff near Minnieska, MN. However, no falcons nested there 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.
- Gary Grunewald spotted two falcons defending the P12 (Alma Marina) cliff. However, they moved off after a week or so of defending the cliff.

There were several sites this year where falcons were completely absent. Some of them had been successful nest sites in previous years, and others are sites where we've commonly spotted falcons in the past. The sites include:

- Lock and Dam 9 Bluff, Crawford County, WI. Previously successful nest site.
- Shellhorn Bluff, Brownsville, Houston County, MN. Previously successful nest site.
- P-4 (Homer Bluff), Winona County, MN. Previously successful nest site.
- Pepin Heights Bluff, MN. No falcons spotted this year.
- Indian Head Bluff, Fountain City, WI. No falcons spotted this year.
- Trempeleau Bluff, Trempeleau, WI. No falcons spotted this year.
- Twin Bluffs, Nelson, WI. No falcons spotted this year.
- Dead Cow Bluff, Lansing, IA. No falcons were spotted this year.

We also monitor a few sites where falcons have not yet been seen, although they provide likely habitat. These sites include:

- Bay City Bluff, Bay City, WI
- Diamond Head Bluff, WI
- ADM Stack House, St. Paul, MN. This nestbox replaced the nestbox on the old High Bridge stack.

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 43 young since Bob Anderson installed it on Earth Day of 1993, making it the most productive metro-area nest. Diane Gulbrandson reports that TT, a 2005 alumnus, is nesting along the Mississippi river.

Bob banded three babies here on July 6th.

Year ospreys first nested here: 1993 | Total young fledged from this location (2009): 43



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. Troy Bauer, an Xcel Energy employee, spiked up the pole to retrieve the babies, which were put into a kennel for safe lowering. We were also joined by Judy Englund from the Three Rivers Park District. Together, the crew banded three babies here on July 11.

A big thanks to Troy for his assistance – we could not have banded the babies without him.

Total young fledged since 2008: 6



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.

The eagle laid her first egg on February 17. The first of three eaglets hatched on March 27. On April 17th, a cold, wet snowstorm struck. One adult disappeared and the other was gone from the nest long enough that the young eaglets all died of exposure.

Total young fledged in 2009: 0.

Decorah Fish Hatchery Nest | Decorah, IA

We made this camera available via the internet in early February, and it was an immediate hit. We began by serving the image directly from the axis server. However, this only allows 20 simultaneous connections, and Bob began to get complaints. Amy Ries used some technological trickery to make the image stream available via hostmonster, which worked very well until the site was shut down. We are in a shared hosting environment that allows a maximum of 400 simultaneous connections. At the time we were shut down, we had 250 and climbing, with a daily transfer rate in the gigabytes. Amy talked Hostmonster into turning the Raptor Resource Project site back on, with the condition that she slowed the stream until it could be re-hosted, and Xcel Energy agreed to host the eagle stream at their site.



It was really fun to see the community interest in this site. Bob heard feedback from many community members who enjoyed watching the eagles on cam. We had 78,000 unique visitors view over 3 million pages this year, and our most popular page featured the Decorah eagles.

We plan to have an even better eaglecam site next year.

Total young fledged in 2009: 3

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.

Since the Barn Owl camera failed, we don't know whether the nest was productive. The GHO nest failed due to extremely aggressive ravens. The ravens attacked the owls and drove them from the nestbox. When Dave Madonna climbed up to the nestbox to check it, he was attacked by the ravens as well.

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, four of which hatched beginning on April 23rd

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. We really appreciate all of Ken's work – he is cleaning up a real mess!



The picture at right shows the last of the kestrels to fledge.

Total young fledged in 2009: 4

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.

- [Nora's Photo Album](#)
(includes Lansing, Lynxville and Leo's Bluff)
- [Nora's YouTube videos](#)
- [Julie O'Conner's PeregrineWatch Page](#) (Hawk Ridge, Duluth)
- [Dennis McManus's Blog](#)
- [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](#)