

2018 Raptor Resource Project Banding Report



Peregrine Falcon Michelle at Great Spirit Bluff in Dresbach, MN

I hope you enjoy our report detailing banding activities and our 2018 nesting season. Each year brings something new and different and 2018 really kept us on our toes. Our raptor monitoring and banding programs grew with excellent contributions from volunteers and staff. By design, that growth led to increased interaction with landowner partners, students, and the public. We are very excited about new partnerships with Cornell University, the Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge, and the Brice Prairie Conservation Association; about new cameras in a kestrel nest box in Wisconsin and on the Mississippi River in Lake Onalaska; and about the continued expansion of our Education in Action program, which nearly doubled in size this year. We also completed our move from Ustream to Explore.org. This move has allowed us to increase stream quality, drop advertising, and better respond to the ever-growing array of devices, phones, tablets, and computers.



RRP Director John Howe at Great Spirit Bluff

Peregrine falcon monitoring activities kicked off as usual, but we noticed a significant number of sites with decreased hatch production. Despite a late end to winter and wet spring with some localized black fly and hippoboscids infestations, we tended a record number of sites and banded 72 healthy young falcons. We added several new sites, including Arcola Mills along the St. Croix River and Root River Bluff along the Mississippi River: two historic eyries that had been unused since the mid-1950s. The discovery of activity at Effigy Mounds National Monument 20 years after the historic two-year release of cliff-hacked falcons at Hanging Rock is a success story worth noting! We are very excited to watch and maybe band peregrine falcons there in 2019.

We worked with Iowa Public Television to film our peregrine falcon monitoring activities along the Mississippi River bluffs in Iowa. We dropped over the bluffs and banded falcons while the process was filmed with sweeping passes from aerial cameras above. The use of state-of-the-art filming techniques is important to our monitoring and data gathering processes and crucial to helping tell the public about peregrine falcon recovery efforts and the dedication needed to monitor continued success.

We completed the second year of trapping, monitoring and banding raptors at our Hawk Hill banding station on the NW corner of the Luther College campus. This partnership with the Luther College has been a complete success! Dave Kester and Jon Stravers worked closely with Emily Neal of the Center for Sustainable Communities and Environmental Studies to coordinate the program for college interns. This marks the close of our second year and we will move forward in 2019 for a third year providing students with unprecedented direct access to conservation research.

It was a year of unexpected change in Decorah. After a late snow storm in mid-April, we lost our beloved Dad Decorah - an eagle that has educated and entertained so many over the past 10 years. It was almost like losing a family member. It has been bittersweet getting used to his absence and watching Mom Decorah raise three eaglets to fledge and dispersal on her own. While we won't see eggs until February or March, Mom appears to have accepted a new mate. The two of them are doing everything right up to this point; defending the valley, working on the N2B nest, and preparing it for eggs next year. Our Decorah North Eagles worked on two clutches of eggs this season. After the first lone egg failed, the female re-clutched. We were thrilled at a chance for a second clutch and so disappointed when they succumbed to heat and blackflies a week after hatch. Fortunately, our Fort St. Vrain eagles had another wonderful year, raising three eaglets to fledge. We spent late August, September,

October, and early November working on cameras and microphones, although the highlight of our fall activities was rebuilding the Decorah North eagle nest after it fell! The eagles appear to have adopted the nest and are putting their signature touches on in the form of branches, corn husks and grasses. We hope that they will finish it off with some eggs next year.

I have been serving as full-time director for two years and I could not be happier serving in that role! Thank you for making that happen with your financial and volunteer support. Here's to a productive year to come!

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who helps us monitor sites, ID falcons, track hatch dates, band falcons, and gifts us with donations. You are a crucial part of what we do. A special thanks to Bill Smith for all his work monitoring sites and bringing in volunteers including Mark Blackburn, Jane Furchgott, Ken Lange, Matt Berg, and Maggie Jones. Many thanks also to our forum members! We are deeply grateful for your work monitoring young.

Education is a core part of our mission. A heartfelt thanks to all of our moderators, especially lead Decorah Eagle mods jfranci, Tulsa, and Oregonian; lead Decorah North Eagle mod BremerBirdFan, and Facebook lead mods Sherri Elliott and EagleLady4. Your leadership, dedication, and hard work are a vital part of our success. A shoutout to Pagent for her very hard work organizing our awesome After the Fledge party. Our mods volunteer long hours and are an invaluable source of information and inspiration for millions. Thank you so much for your hard work, knowledge, and experience. We are deeply grateful for the best moderating teams around! Thanks also to Charles Eldermire from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for all of his work on our new kestrel cam.

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

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

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

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

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

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

John Howe, Director Raptor Resource Project

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Minnesota

Xcel Energy Sherco Plant, Becker MN

Seasonal Data

Location: 45.375, -93.891

Adult Female: 30/B, banded as a juvenile in 2002

Adult Male: Unbanded

Laying began: 4/13/18 | 4 laid, 2 hatched

Hatch began: 5/21/18

Banding: 6/12/18 | Site visits: 3/28, 6/12

1947-35539 89/X Mac

1156-23764 94/B Pete

Banding at Sherco is always pleasant! We take an elevator to the 400-foot level of the stack, collect the little falcons in a kennel, and bring them down to the guard shack for banding! This year, our helpers included Jessica Keller, her daughter Emily, John Kaczmarek, Liam Grainger and plant staff and children. We banded the falcons, let everyone see them, and answered questions.

We get questions about what this site looks like. The falcons are nesting in a box at the 400'-level catwalk, which is quite large as catwalks go. The box is mounted on a platform, which means that young falcons can get out and walk around out of site of the cameras. If they end up on the catwalk during fledge, their parents will find them and feed them below. The platform, catwalk, and enclosure make a great playground for fledgling falcons, and our new camera made it possible to get band information this year! This camera can be watched at

<https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/xcel-energy-cams/> or <https://birdcam.xcelenergy.com/>

Year falcons first nested: 1992 | Total number of young produced (2018): 66



RRP Director John Howe with Emily



Minnesota

Xcel Energy Monticello Plant, Monticello MN

Seasonal Data

Location: 45.333061, -93.847505

Adult Female: Unknown | Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 4/3/18 (estimated) | Number of eggs laid: unknown

Hatch began: 5/10/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/14/18 | Site visits: 6/14/18

1947-35522 59/X Gamma

1156-23765 95/B Alpha

1156-23766 96/B Beta

Were we going to be able to squeeze Monticello in? The rain gods gave us a break and we climbed the stack with Xcel employee Justin Nelson on a very hot day to band three falcons that were 32 to 35 days old. The female was a monster – very large and heavy compared to her older but smaller brothers. There is no doubt that little sister was at the front of every food line! We also climbed to the top of the stack and helped change the light. We are very glad to be back at Monticello!

Year falcons first nested here: 1995 | Total number of falcons produced here (2018): 58

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

Seasonal Data

Location: 45.033, -92.782

Adult Female: Kris 69/W, a 2011 hatch from Dairyland Power Cohasset

Adult Male: Slate 08/C, a 2012 hatch from the Colonnade Building in Golden Valley, MN

Laying began: 4/15/18 | 4 laid, 2 hatched

Hatch began: 5/23/18

Banding: 6/14/18 | Site visits: 6/14/18

1156-23748 21/B Faraday

1156-23749 22/B Magneto

We banded with Xcel employees Randy Fordice, Bridget Shore, Bill Wardell, and Tawny Meyer, and project friend Amber Burnette, who holds banding permits for passerines and diurnal raptors. The little falcons had nice full crops, no parasites, and lovely yellow legs. As usual,

mother Kris was a real handful, but Bill was able to keep her away with a broom. We were happy to get band numbers on both adults here and the falcons looked great! This camera can be watched at

<https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/xcel-energy-cams/> or <https://birdcam.xcelenergy.com/>.

Year falcons first nested: 1989 | Total number of young produced (2018): 71



Amy and Amber Burnette

Minnesota

Xcel Energy High Bridge Plant, St. Paul MN

Seasonal Data

Location: 44.930889, -93.111034

Adult Female: Unknown | Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 4/08/18 | 4 laid, 2 hatched,

Hatch began: 5/15/18 (estimated)

Banding: 6/04/18 | Site visits: 3/09, 6/04

1156-23739 12/B Stormy

Falcons nested here until 2007, when Xcel Energy removed their stack and converted the plant to natural gas. We put a replacement box up on the nearby ADM plant, but the falcons chose to go back to the High Bridge instead. We put a nest box up on the roof in 2016 and falcons adopted it in 2017.

Two falcons hatched this year, but only one was left when we came to band. We were helped by Luke, his son Drew, Scott Anton, his niece Jenny (a recent wildlife management graduate), and Amber Burnette. Stormy was a very healthy little falcon and it was a lot of fun to bring the next generation face to face with him as we banded! We hope to install a camera here this fall.



Luke, Drew, and Stormy

Year falcons first nested here: 2000 | Total young fledged from this location (2018): 24

Xcel Energy Riverside Plant, Minneapolis MN

Seasonal Data

Location: 45.021, -93.275

Adult Female: Unknown | Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 5/12/18 | 4 laid, 2 hatched | Hatch began: 6/18/18

Banding: 7/11/18 | Site visits: 7/11/18

1947-35528 86/X Hazel

1156-23753 27/B Neptune

I'm not sure we've ever banded falcons in mid-July before, but the Riverside banding went very well. It was attended by a 4H club and a group of electricians who were at a training. Everyone had a great time and the kids asked a lot of good questions! So why were the falcons so late? We weren't able to get band numbers here, but I suspect we had mate switchover fairly late in the season – we've seen this cause a delay at other sites. We'll be very curious to see what egg-timing looks like at this location next year! We hope to install a camera here this fall.



Amy and John banding at Riverside

Year falcons first nested: 1998 | Total number of young produced (2018): 22

Minnesota

Xcel Energy Prairie Island Plant, Prairie Island MN

Seasonal Data

Adult Female: Unknown | Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 4/07/18 (estimated) | 4 laid, 3 hatched

Hatch began: 5/11/18 (estimated)

Banding: 6/01/18 | Site visits: 6/01/18

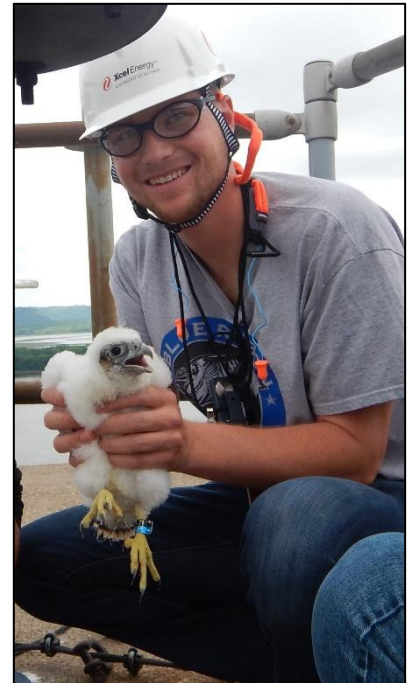
1947-35512 71/P Jumper

1947-35513 50/X Joyce

1156-23730 10/B Oelkers

I love Prairie Island and it is always great to see Frank Sperlak, a true falcon friend who has supported our work for many years! He, John, Xcel employees Ann Silver and Dan Schact, and myself went up the dome to retrieve three healthy little falcons. They had a few hippoboscids – not uncommon this year – and what might have been a black fly bite or two, but they were in great shape overall! Thanks to Frank and his crew for all their help! The new nestbox makes banding here a breeze!

The adult female at Prairie Island is fairly aggressive, which gave us a chance to get her band number. Unfortunately, her bands are very old and faded, which makes even the auxiliary band hard to read. The top character appears to be an H and the band is black and green. The most likely falcon is H/83, a 2006 hatch from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. We'll see if we can get a positive ID next year!



Dan Schact holding a falcon



Frank Sperlak getting falcons from the nest box



Ann Silver helping with banding

Year falcons first nested: 1997 | Total number of young produced (2018): 68

Minnesota

Minnesota Power and Light Boswell Energy Center, Cohasset MN

Seasonal Data

Location: 47.259, -93.653

Adult Female: Unbanded | Adult Male: Unbanded

Laying began: 4/22/18 | 4 laid, 3 hatched | Hatch began: 5/30/18

Banding: 6/20/18 | Site visits: 6/20

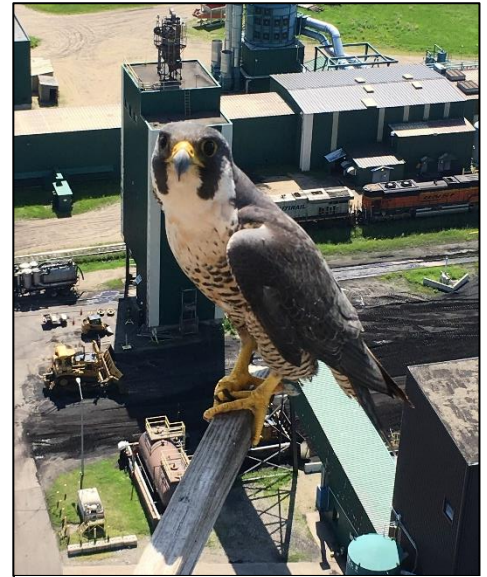
1947-35554 63/X Disco

1156-23718 40/B Turek

1156-23719 60/B Lee

John got to make his first visit to Cohasset this year! While neither adult is banded, we think we have the same female we did last year based on her behavior. She wasn't especially aggressive in terms of striking, but she was very hard to shift out of her nest box when John went to remove the nestlings for banding.

We see unbanded falcons here year after year. While there are unbanded populations of falcons along Lake Superior's shore (the shoreline is huge and quite rugged in some places), I'm starting to wonder if we don't have a tree-nesting population somewhere in the Northland. Previously unknown tree-nesting peregrines have been documented on the west coast: <http://bit.ly/2DgIK6f>. Either way, congratulations to MPL for hosting our top-producing falcon site!



Unbanded female falcon Fearless. She gets close!

Year falcons first nested: 1993 | Total number of young produced (2018): 77

Rob's Nestbox, Greysolon Plaza, Duluth MN

Seasonal data

Location: 46.789, -92.095

Adult F: Canada *B/8, a 2004 hatch from Mount McRae, Ont.

Adult M: Junior 89/B

Laying began: 4/16/18 (estimated) | 4 laid, 2 hatched

Hatch began: 5/23/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/13/18 | Site visits: 5/22, 6/13

1947-35540 90/X Kennedy

1947-35541 91/X Turk

It was a great year at Greysolon, especially after we were skunked here last year! We took the little falcons down to the community room to band them. It was so rewarding to see the residents light up as they watched and interacted with us and with the falcons. They were fascinated by every aspect of the banding and we answered a lot of questions about these falcons in particular, falcons in general, DDT and recovery, and how and why banding was done. We were joined by Greysolon property manager Wendy Hoornstra, who arranged the room for us; Isaac Ries, who helped run the broom, and about 20 Greysolon residents.



Residents meeting the Greysolon babies!

Year falcons first nested: 2003 | Total number of young produced (2018): 41 | Total sites in complex: 2

Minnesota

Minnesota Power and Light Hibbard Plant, Duluth MN

Seasonal data

Location: 46.735, -92.152

Adult female: *R/*U Isabel, a 2009 hatch from the Colonnade Building in Minneapolis

Adult male: unknown

Laying began: 4/13/18 | 4 laid, 3 hatched

Hatch began: 5/21/18

Banding: 6/11/18 | Site visits: 5/16 – 5/22, 6/11

1947-35537 87/X Brunhilde

1947-35538 88/X Feisty

1156-23763 93/B Henry

We got a call from Hibbard in mid-May. Their stack, which is located about 340 feet over a parking lot, had shed a sizeable chunk of concrete during a violent windstorm. The stack needed repair and they wanted someone from RRP to come up and help with the falcons.

We wondered how the falcons would tolerate repairs. Their eggs were scheduled to hatch during the repair window. We made a plan to avoid that area of the stack if at all possible and the repair crew set to work while Amy observed. The first day of work was extremely hot – 89 degrees! – and the falcons spent a lot of time on defense. When they went after the stack workers, Amy stood by their nestbox, which drew them away from the workers. The second day of stack work was very cold – 39 degrees! – and the falcons spent most of their time on eggs. As long as they stayed on their side of the stack, we stayed on ours. With that understanding in place, the falcons quickly lost interest in us. Three eggs hatched while we were up stack and three young falcons were there for John to band when we returned on June 11.

Thanks to Minnesota Power and Light and International Chimney for working with us to keep the repair crew and the falcons safe! We're hoping to put this site back online next year!

Year falcons first nested: 2003 | Total number of young produced (2018): 44



Stack repairs. The nestbox is around the stack on the first catwalk. The temporary scaffold on top was erected for stack repair.



Banding the falcons three weeks later

Minnesota

Great River Energy, Elk River MN

Seasonal data

Location: 45.296598, -93.558171

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

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

Laying began: 3/26/18 | 4 laid, 4 hatched

Hatch began: 5/7/18

Banding: 5/29/18 | Site visits: 5/29/18

1947-35508	67/P	Nora
1947-35509	68/P	Elsie-Rose
1947-35510	69/P	Grace-Marie
1156-23727	07/B	Joey

It was another hot day for banding! This is a nice site - right across the highway from the Mississippi river and filled with pigeons and jays (judging from the contents of the nestbox). Brenda cleaned the box up and she and John brought the falcons down. We had been a little worried about hatch given the cold temps when the first three eggs were laid, but all of Breezy's eggs hatched and the young falcons looked great!

Note that former resident female Mary Ellen was replaced by Breezy, a two-year-old falcon that stopped by the nest box in September of 2017. Brooklyn courted and fed her – a good move on his part, since she returned. We don't know what happened to Mary Ellen. Fledgling 68/P Elsie-Rose was spotted on cam at Great Spirit Bluff on October 25th.



Brenda Geisler and Amy Ries banding Nora 67/P



Elsie-Rose on camera at Great Spirit Bluff

Falcons first nested: 2007 | Total number of young produced (2018): 34

Minnesota

Arcola Mills, Arcola Mills MN

Seasonal data

Location: undisclosed

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Egg laying began: 4/23/18 (estimated) | 4 laid, 3 eggs

Hatch began: 5/29/18

Banding: 6/18/18 | Site visits: 4/22, 5/22, 5/29, 6/18, 7/13

1947-35544 94/X Cindy

1947-35545 95/X Dax

We were very excited when Bill Smith and Matt Berg found this site – the most northern site on the Saint Croix river that we know of. I remember Bob talking about meeting landowners at a historic peregrine eyrie back in the late 1980s or early 1990s, and I always wondered who they were. I recounted the story the first time I met them, and it turns out...it was them! I was thrilled to be following in Bob's footsteps and knew how excited he would be about this site.

The eyrie is a bit of work to get to – you have to rappel off a point, swing past a huge overhang, land on a ledge, put slack in the rope, and walk across the ledge to get to the falcons. Once you get to the eyrie, you have to catch the falcons before they can run around an inaccessible corner (Amy was not able to get one of falcons) and carefully load them into the kennel. The cliff is soft sandstone capped and underlain by harder limestone, so at least the rock is solid and the ledge is wide. Falcons should probably be banded on the younger side at this location given how easy it is for them to run out of reach.

The landowners were absolutely thrilled to meet their falcons and we are looking forward to banding there again next year!

Falcons first nested: 2018 | Total number of young produced (2018): 3



Two well-fed little falcons in the kennel



The landowners were excited to meet their falcons!



Amy at the eyrie. The falcons can be seen from the top of the cliff.

Minnesota

3M Watertower, Cottage Grove MN

Seasonal data

Location: 44.790, -92.912

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Egg laying began: 4/07/18 | 4 laid, 3 hatched

Hatch began: 5/14/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/04/18 | Site visits: 6/04

1947-35515 52/X Sasheen

1947-35516 53/X Lacelon

1156-23740 13/B Mistlon

3M is always an interesting site! Bob Anderson, Rob MacIntyre, and Amy Ries put a nest box up on the water tower in 2007, and falcons adopted it the next year. To get to the nest box, we climb a ladder up the middle of the 3M watertower, emerging through a hatch on the top of the tower. After tying off, one person hops over the ring and retrieves the birds from the nestbox. We used to get them one at a time, but we added a flexible fabric cube storage bin from Target to our gear. This makes it very easy to get all of the falcons at once and minimizes risk to the banders and the falcons. Thanks to 3M employee Trevor Shearen for a helping hand and a big grin!



Trevor with Lacelon

Year falcons first nested: 2008 | Total number of young produced (2018): 27

Bay State Milling, Winona MN

Seasonal data

Location: 44.053411, -91.631531

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

Adult male: unknown

Egg laying began: 4/12/18 | Egg total unknown

Hatch began: 5/19/18 (estimated) | 3 eggs hatched

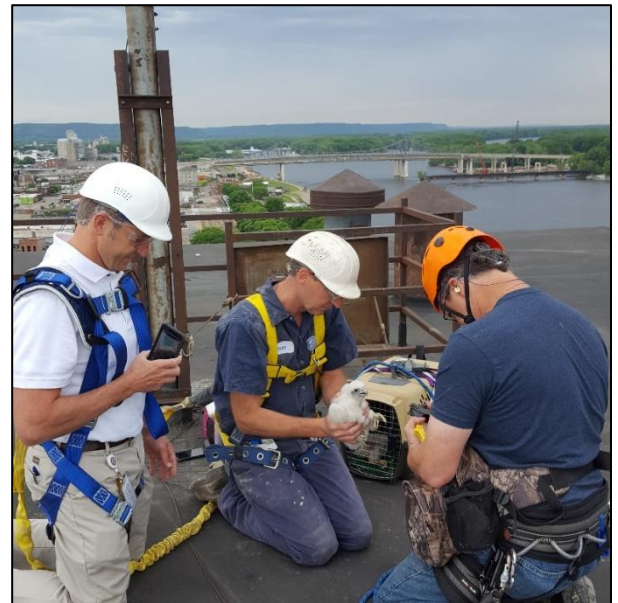
Banding: 6/06/18 | Site visits: 3/16, 3/25, 5/9, 6/6

1947-35517 54/X Barbara

1947-35518 55/X Bonnie

1947-35519 56/X Brenda

The falcons on this site float back and forth between the nestbox at Bay State Milling and Castle Rock cliff across the river. We think the two sites are too close together to support two nesting pairs of falcons, since we've never seen a pair at each place at the same time. The plant manager and staff are big fans of the falcons and we named all three of them after the great-granddaughters of the



Jeremy Holman, Jason Wantoch, and John Howe banding the falcons at BSM

Minnesota

company's founder. The little falcons were healthy but had ear screwworm and a moderate hippoboscid infestation. While we didn't have any fatal hippoboscid infestations that we know, mild to moderate infestations were fairly common this year. We squashed bugs and cleaned the nestbox before putting the falcons back. That took care of the problem and all three falcons made it to fledge!

This site can be watched online at <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/additional-falcon-cams/>.

Year falcons first nested: 2009 | Total number of young produced (2018): 27 | Total sites in complex: 2

P-4 (Homer Bluff), Homer MN

Seasonal data

Location: 44.023, -91.576

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Egg laying began: 3/25/18 | 4 laid, 2 hatched

Hatch began: 5/01/18 (estimated)

Banding: 6/01/18 | Site visits: 3/5, 3/16, 3/20, 3/25, 3/29, 5/15, 6/01

- 1947-35514 51/X Eletan
- 1156-23731 11/B Eli

After several days of rain and failed nests, we finally had a productive day! Dave and John banded and Amy went down to the nest. They've nested at two spots on this cliff – a large pothole about ten feet from the top of the cliff and a smaller pothole about forty feet down from a large scallop at the top. The site is easy to get to, the potholes are easy to find, the rock is solid, and banding here was a breeze. The falcons looked great - healthy, alert, nice crops, and no hippoboscids!



Eletan left, Eli right.

The photo of the little falcons shows what a difference just a few days can make in plumage development. Eletan's is maybe three days older than her brother Eli, but she has a lot more juvenile feathers poking through her fuzzy white down and she's almost lost her 'cap'. Feather emergence is very helpful in aging young peregrine falcons when we don't have lay or hatch dates.

Year falcons first nested: 2007 | Total number produced (2018): 21 | Total sites in complex: 2

Minnesota

P-17 (Great Spirit Bluff), Dresbach MN

Seasonal data

Location: 43.871, -91.320

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

Adult Male: Unbanded, referred to as 'Newman'

Egg laying began: 3/30/18 | 4 laid, 2 hatched

Hatch began: 5/08/18

Banding: 5/27/18

1947-30409 59/P Linnea

1947-30410 66/P Ella

Great Spirit Bluff is owned by RRP director John Howe and is what originally drew him into working with our program. It is a spectacularly beautiful site that the family put into a conservation easement instead of the open market, preserving it into perpetuity.

We thought about calling the banding off because of the heat but decided we could do it as long as we moved fast, minimized handling, and kept the falcons in the shade. John rappelled, Dave topped, and Amy banded. The young falcons were healthy and in good shape, although Amy squished a few hippoboscids flies. While Amy was banding, John and Dave installed a blower to help keep blackflies at bay. It worked extremely well and we had no problems with them jumping early to escape blackflies this year! From start to finish, banding took about five minutes – possibly the fastest cliff banding we've ever done.

After it was over, we enjoyed a nice dinner courtesy of the Howes. We've been banding falcons here for thirteen years and it was fun to look over photos from earlier years and see how much everyone had grown. Most of the teenagers would have been toddlers or young children when the site became active. It was good to see that they haven't lost their enthusiasm for and interest in the falcons! Great Spirit Bluff can be watched online at www.raptorresource.org.

Year falcons first nested: 2005 | Total number of young produced (2018): 43



Falcon Linnea shows off her new jewelry!



Wisconsin

Xcel Energy Bayfront Plant, Ashland WI

Seasonal Data

Location: 46.587202, -90.902355

Adult Female: Unknown

Adult Male: 69/C “Babyface”, a 2010 hatch from Bunge McGregor

Laying began: 5/5/18 (estimated) | 4 eggs laid, 4 eggs hatched

Hatch began: 6/11/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/29/18 | Site visits: 6/29

1947-35527	77/X	Bernice
1156-23750	23/B	Frank
1156-23751	24/B	Mason
1156-23752	25/B	Untee

Xcel Ashland always tends to be on the later side, and this year was no exception!

The little falcons were named by plant employees. “Untee” is a Finnish word that

means small – fitting, since Untee was both the smallest and the youngest of the

four. Amy was assisted by Lynn Hall, Dale Micheletti, and Ken Ries. In addition to keeping us up on falcon news, Lynn and Dale sometimes have to remove fledgling falcons from an unused stack next to the nest. Dale fabricated a grate that will be placed on top of the stack in late fall or early winter of 2018. Thanks so much to Lynn, Dale, and Xcel Energy for their commitment and hard work to keep their falcons and other birds safe!

Followers might remember that we had a serious hippoboscids problem here last year. We cleaned out the box and put in fresh gravel when we visited last year. All of the falcons looked great and we had no problems whatsoever this year.

Falcons first nested: 2014 | Total number of falcons produced (2018): 16 | Total sites in complex: 2



Ashland falcons. Untee at front!

Diamond Bluff, Hagar City WI

Seasonal Data

Location: 44.628753, -92.583771

Adult Female: Unknown

Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 4/14/18 (estimated) | Unknown number of eggs laid

Hatch began: 5/21/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/15/18 | Site visits: 3/16, 3/15, 3/25, 5/21, 6/15

1947-35542	92/X	Amharan
1947-35543	93/X	Trotter
1156-23767	97/B	Isaac

This is always an interesting site, since it requires rappelling off a truck to get down to

the eyrie. This year, the falcons nested in a large pothole right above the nestbox. It’s an easy place to reach but a hard place to take cover from the aggressive female’s strikes! Amy rappelled and John Howe banded, assisted by Isaac Ries.

Year falcons first nested: 2011 | Total number of young produced (2018): 12 | Total sites in complex: 3



Wisconsin

P-11: Maiden Rock, Maiden Rock WI

Seasonal Data

Location: 44.5, - 92.2866666

Adult Female: Unknown

Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 4/10/18 (estimated) | 4 eggs laid, 4 eggs hatched

Hatch began: 5/17/18 (estimated)

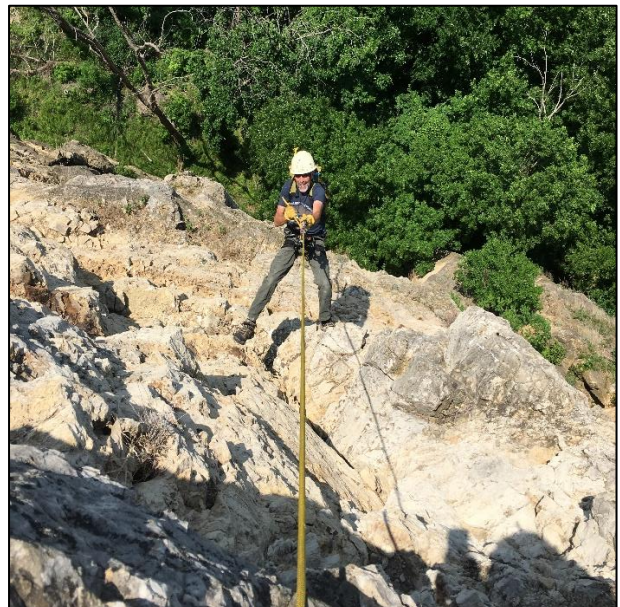
Banding date: 6/06/18 | Site visits: 3/03, 3/16, 3/25, 5/27, 6/06, 6/24

1156-23741	14/B	Neenah
1156-23742	15/B	Menasha
1156-23743	16/B	Wira
1156-23744	17/B	Waupun

We had a full house at Maiden Rock for banding this year! Kesley Secric, Rori Paloski, Mitch Block, Steve Pence, Joe Krumrie, and DNR property manager Dean Edlin all came along to provide a helping hand. Dean and his crew have done a wonderful job restoring Maiden Rock and they are very proud of their falcons! It was hard to sex the young falcons since all of them were male – something that doesn’t happen very often – and it took us a little longer than usual to get the job done. All four falcons were healthy and parasite free!

I have this written in my notes: *Loading requires two people here.* As we’ve gotten more experience (and more sites to get to) we’ve moved away from sending multiple people down cliffs. This allows us to move faster, but Maiden Rock is a big, complicated cliff system that requires more than one person to safely collect and load falcons. We’ll need to remember this next year!

Falcons first nested: 2001 | Total number of falcons produced here (2018): 37 | Total sites in complex: 5



Wisconsin

Maassen's Bluff, Nelson WI

Seasonal Data

Location: 44.383244, -91.962153

Adult Female: Unknown, probably "Mrs. Mamba"

Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 4/2/18 (estimated) | Unknown number of eggs laid

Hatch began: 5/9/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/08/18 | Site visits: 3/16, 3/25, 3/29, 6/08

1947-35520	57/X	Lorrie
1156-23745	18/B	Otto
1156-23746	19/B	Hickey

We had several sites where falcons were older than we expected. We normally band 18 to 23-day-old falcons at Maassen's Bluff in early June, but these falcons were about 30 to 32 days old and very footy. As feisty as the young were, they were nothing compared to their mother! 'Mrs. Mamba' has nested here since 2015, and she is truly terrifying! She started hitting us as soon as we came out of the woods at the top of the bluff and didn't let up until we were gone. We actually made two trips down to recover the falcons. On the first trip, Amy and John checked the usual eyrie several likely potholes while dodging the wrath of the Mamba! Amy not so successful at dodging and got nailed in the ear. When we didn't find the falcons, we went back down to the bottom of the cliff and put it back under glass. Fortunately – or maybe unfortunately! – Dave found the falcons in a new pothole just off the point of the cliff and we went back up to retrieve them. Dave and Amy rappelled down to get them. Dave loaded them while Amy sat above him with a broom to keep the Mamba away. We banded them, returned them, and got out of there as quickly as we could!



Dave in his Mrs. Mamba armor!

and
was

Year falcons first nested: 2001 | Total number of young produced (2018): 27 | Total sites in complex: 4



Wisconsin

US Bank, La Crosse WI

Seasonal Data

Location: 43.8135, -91.2527777

Adult Female: C/78, a 2014 hatch from MPL Hibbard (approximately 214 miles north)

Adult Male: Unbanded

Laying began: 3/29/18 | 4 laid, 3 hatched

Hatch began: 5/9/18

Banding date: 5/30/18 | Site visits:

1947-35511	70/P	Crystal
1156-23728	08/B	Speedy
1156-23729	09/B	Abraham

This is a fun site and one of our few public bandings! We walk across a bank lobby floor, step into a swanky elevator, and get a luxury ride to the roof. We climb two ladders, block off the front of the box, remove the lid, remove the falcons, and take them down to the lobby.

Watchers are always excited to see their falcons up close and the banding was well-attended! All of the little

falcons were in good body condition, with no sign of Frounce plaques and just a few easily squashed hippoboscids flies. Their names were chosen by children who attended the banding. This site can be watched from the roof of the municipal parking garage by US Bank, or via a monitor in the bank's lobby. You can see a video and photos from the banding here: <http://bit.ly/2DfvJsk>.

Year falcons first nested: 2006 | Total number of young produced (2018): 35

Dairyland Power, Genoa WI

Seasonal Data

Location: 43.5593888, -91.2326111

Adult Female: 32/V Peta, a 2012 hatch from Busch Agricultural Gardens

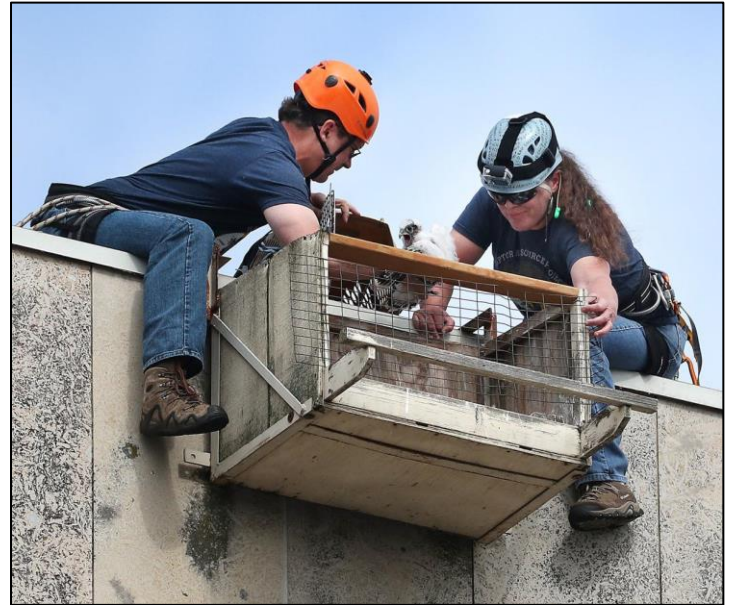
Adult Male: A/36 Marcelle, a male banded female at West Bluff in 2013.

Laying began: 3/26/18 | 4 eggs laid, 4 eggs hatched | Hatch began: 5/4/18

Banding date: 5/25/18 | Site visits: 5/25/18

1947-3046	56/P	Millennium
1947-3047	57/P	Skywalker
1947-3048	58/P	Lucia
1156-23726	06/B	Dagger

We banded four young falcons in the lunchroom, which was nice and cool on a very hot day! The banding was attended by Dairyland Power employees, including Brad Foss and Ben Campbell, who have both been extremely supportive of our work. The young falcons were healthy and well-fed!



Retrieving the young falcons at US Bank



Brad Foss with the Genoa nestlings

Wisconsin

What do they eat? We cleaned out the nestbox and took a look at the feathers we recovered. Species included Northern Flicker (yellow-shafted) – a very popular prey species that we find at almost every nest – Blue Jay (also very popular), Rock Dove (pigeon), American Robin, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. We'll be talking to some feather people for ID help on the feathers we couldn't source.

This site can be watched at www.raptorresource.org.

Year falcons first nested: 1998 | Total number of young produced (2018): 66

Redbird Bluff, Desoto WI

Seasonal Data

Location: 43.500845, -91.212834

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

Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 3/28/18 (estimated) | Unknown number of eggs laid

Hatch began: 5/04/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/08/18 | Site visits: 3/10, 3/20, 3/22, 4/05, 5/31, 6/08

1947-35521 58/X Charlotte

1156-23747 20/B Clutch

After the excitement of Maassen's Bluff, it was nice to get to Redbird. Unusually, the eyrie is located maybe 30 feet above the talus slope!

Instead of raising the falcons, Dave Kester descended to the nest and lowered them falcons to the ground. He sat in the eyrie – a new, less overhung pothole – and waited while we banded them. Like Maassen's bluff, the falcons were older than we expected. When we banded this time last year, the falcons were about 14 days old – about the youngest we would feel comfortable banding them. This year, they were roughly 33 to 35 days old and a lot harder to handle! Rich King's grandson Jaxton named the falcons. We especially liked the name Clutch, which he chose because it was the first thing the falcon tried to do!



Year falcons first nested: 2017 | Total number of young produced (2018): 5 | Total number of sites in complex: 2

Iowa

Bunge North America, McGregor IA

Seasonal data

Adult Female: *U/*R Bubbles, a 2009 hatch from the 3M watertower in Cottage Grove, MN

Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 3/14/18 (estimated) | 4 eggs laid, 4 eggs hatched

Hatch began: 4/16/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 5/24/18

1156-23724	04/B	Squirt
1156-23725	05/B	Scaith
1947-30404	54/P	Ming
1947-30405	55/P	Sophia

We arrived to find the falcons much older than we expected! We don't have a camera to help determine hatch date but for the past three years, the falcons have been between 18 and 23 days old on May 20th. This year, they were 33-36 days old - a big surprise! The flip-down lid had vanished from the box, but we found something to block the front, hand-captured the young falcons, and banded them with the help of Sophia Landis (who is studying birds with John Stravers and currently working in our Hawk Hill banding station) and Brian (a Bunge employee). The not-so-little falcons were healthy and very, very footy!

Year falcons first nested: 2010 | Total number of young produced (2018): 21

Guider's Bluff, Lansing, Iowa

Seasonal Data

Location: 43.346140, -91.193744

Adult Female: Unknown

Adult Male: Unknown

Laying began: 4/25/18 (estimated) | 4 eggs laid, 4 eggs hatched

Hatch began: 5/29/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/18/18

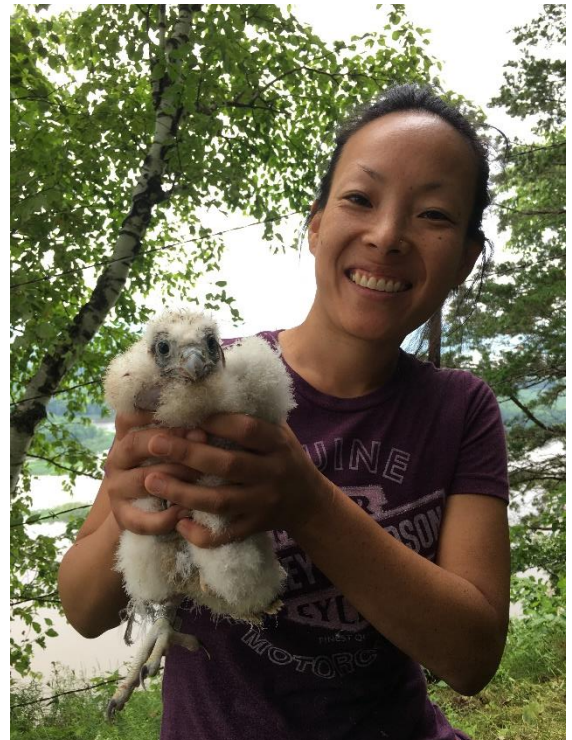
Site visits:

1947-35523	60/X	Capelli
1947-35524	61/X	Missy
1947-35525	75/X	Kia-kek
1947-35526	76/X	Harriet

We first visited Guider's Bluff on June 5th, but the little falcons were too young to band. We came back on June 18th and were very pleased to find four healthy roughly-20 day old falcons in the nest box. We're not sure why they moved from last year's ledge/pothole site, but the nest



Sophia Landis with a roughly 35-day old falcon



Iowa

box is a lot easier to reach! Angie Guider brought us out to the box, Dave Kester went down to retrieve the falcons and John, Amy, and Aislinn Lee banded them.

Year falcons first nested: 2010 | Total number of falcons produced (2018): 8 | Number of sites in complex: 2

Dubuque County Courthouse, Dubuque, Iowa

Location: 44.525, - 92.29

Adult Female: unbanded

Adult Male: Jeff 58/N, a 2013 hatch from the Savanna silo in Savanna, IL

Laying began: 4/4/18 | 4 eggs laid, 2 eggs hatched

Hatch began: 5/13/18

Banding date: 6/04/18

Site visits: 6/04/18

1947-35549 50/P Kee-shes-wa

1947-35550 51/P Julien

Between construction and spectators, this banding was a busy one! We were surprised at how accepting the falcons were of construction near their nest, something we also saw at Minnesota Power's Hibbard stack in Duluth this

year. The adult female at this site is very aggressive but (unlike most of the aggressive falcons we deal with) doesn't fly up and start striking at banders. Instead, she stays in the nest and lashes out with her feet! Dave tried to catch her so we could band her, but only got a hallux claw in his hand for his trouble.



Thanks to the Dubuque County Conservation Board for all of their help! When the falcons are nesting, they can be watched online at <https://youtu.be/q3LetrxgR9I>.

Year falcons first nested: 2017 | Total number of falcons produced (2018): 3

Illinois

411 Hamilton Building, Peoria IL

Seasonal Data

Female: unbanded

Male: unknown

Laying began: 4/7/18 (estimated) | Unknown number of eggs laid

Hatch began: 5/14/18 (estimated)

Banding date: 6/10/18 | Site visits: 6/10/18

1156-23800 20/R Pryor

1947-35553 62/X Minsk

Bob and Board member Jim Robison installed a nest on the 411 back in 2004. Unfortunately, the local falcons took to a bridge instead, where fledglings tended to end up falling into the water at some point and drowning. We were absolutely thrilled when they started nesting here in 2016. While the site failed when the falcons nest elsewhere in 2017, they adopted the box again this summer, producing two young.

Year falcons first nested: 2016 | Total number of young produced (2018): 5



Falconer and board member Jim Robison with RRP Director John Howe

Productive or Unknown Unbanded Sites

Twin Bluff, Nelson WI

At least three falcons were produced at this site, but the falcons nested in a large pothole with a very narrow, very long passage. We were unable to reach them for banding. Falcons have nested here since 2014 and produced 18 young to date. There are two cliffs and three sites in the complex.

West Bluff, Maiden Rock WI

Landowners Dan and Sheila reported eyasses on site, but we were unable to band them and I don't have a production count. The falcons used the Ogren eyrie, which is difficult to reach and hard to observe. Total sites in complex: 2

Aggie's Bluff, Lansing IA

While we saw adult falcons and Bill Smith saw copulation, we never saw or heard young. Falcons first nested here in 2012 and have produced at least 18 young to date (2018).

Shellhorn Complex, Brownsville MN

Mark Blackbourn and Bill Smith observed falcons here several times this spring, but felt they were not on eggs in April based on the activity he was seeing. Young were not seen or heard on a follow-up visit in June, and no falcons were heard or seen in July. Falcons first nested here in 2008 and have produced at least 7 young to date (2018). Total sites in complex: 3

Bay City Cliff, Bay City WI

This cliff looked promising early on and Bill Smith and Matt Berg saw falcons here both times they visited, but we don't know if the site was successful.

Unproductive Sites

Red Wing Grain, Red Wing MN

Location: 44.565541, -92.540692

Site visits: 3/16, 3/25

This normally productive site had at least two birds: an unknown male and female 77/X, a 2011 hatch from the mouth of the Nipigon river in Canada! The two falcons went through courtship and everything appeared set, but 77/X never laid eggs.

Ardent Milling, Lake City MN

Seasonal data

Location: 44.441, -92.271

Site visits: 5/21

Jim Fuchs watches the Ardent Milling falcons. Although two falcons were present, he warned us that they were probably unproductive this year given the diminished amount of prey and lack of focused activity at the nest box. When Amy visited the site on May 21, she found no eggs and no sign of a scrape. 51 falcons have been produced at this site since it became active 2002. While we sometimes have small clutches, total failure is quite rare. We'll be curious to see who nests here next year.

Root River Bluff, Hokah MN

Location: 43.768455, -91.296184

Site visits: 3/29, 3/30, 4/06, 4/11, 4/19, 5/5, 5/7, 5/16, 6/05, 6/19, 7/19

We've been watching this site for years and were thrilled when Mark Blackbourn and Bill Smith reported falcons here. The landowner, a high school friend of John Howe's, was also very excited about the prospect of young falcons and accompanied us on our first trip up the bluff on June 5th. When Amy rappelled down, she found one hatchling falcon. It couldn't stand, its eyes were closed, and its feathers were still damp from hatching. Amy left immediately and the falcon returned to the eyrie before she was four feet above it. No other eggs or young were seen during her quick investigation.

When we returned to band on 6/18, we were very disappointed to find an empty eyrie. There were no eggs, no nestlings, and no adult falcons. A follow-up survey on July 19 found no falcons. Thanks to landowner Joel Dagendash, Bill Smith, and Mark Blackbourn for their support and help. We hope to see falcons at Root River next year!

Unproductive Sites

Wyalusing Quarry, Wyalusing WI

Location: 42.951413, -91.14058

Site visits: 3/20, 3/27, 4/9, 5/24

Male: Unbanded

Female: Freya 82/H, a 2015 hatch from Faith Bluff in Winona county, MN.

Brett Mandernack and Dave Noble both watched this site. Given the presence of two adults and all of the activity around the nest box, were extremely excited to band here this year – and extremely disappointed when the site failed again. Both Brett and Dave reported that the black flies were terrible, so we think we may have had another blackfly-related mortality incident here. The closest we've come to production was last year, when two little falcons hatched but died shortly after. A very heavy rainstorm had soaked the nest box and both little falcons had blackfly bites.

Glen Haven Cliff, Glen Haven WI

Location: 42.836987, -91.073102

Site visits: 3/20, 3/27, 4/9, 6/10

Amy descended and found two addled eggs in the eyrie. The eggs were cold to the touch and very worn, but not sun-faded. We briefly saw the female before descending. She flew away and we did not see her again.

Greshik's Bluff, Fountain City WI

Location: 44.1395277, -91.7255833

Site visits: 3/9/18, 3/16/18, 3/25/18, 5/30/18

This site failed again. John rappelled down and found two addled eggs. They were sun-faded on top, but still dark underneath, indicating a long period of exposure to the sun.

Monehen's Bluff, Lynxville Complex, Lynxville WI

Site visits: 3/20/18, 3/21/18, 3/22/18, 3/26/18, 3/28/18, 5/16/18, 5/30/18

Falcons have nested on three cliffs in this territory: Lynxville bluff, Lee's bluff, and Monehen bluff. They have been at Monehen bluff, aka south Lynxville, for three years now. In 2016, the young falcons were on the wing when we arrived to band on June 16th. In 2017, the falcons were sitting on three fresh-looking eggs on May 25th. Surveys in March didn't turn up any falcons, although Bill Smith and Maggie Jones reported a juvenile falcon at Cold Springs Landing, Bill Smith and Mark Blackbourn reported a juvenile falcon at Hobb's Hollow, and Dave Kester reported an adult at Hobb's Hollow and two adults at Monehen's Bluff. When Amy Ries rappelled down to check last year's eyrie at Monehen's Bluff, she found no signs of nesting. However, she found a scrape, mutes, and plucked feathers on a pothole below the ledge, indicating a nesting attempt. A ledge beneath the pothole was covered with feathers (these falcons ate a lot of blue jays!) but no scrape, which means it most likely served as a plucking post. Ries found no signs of eggs or young, and no falcons were seen during our visit.

Total sites in complex: four

Unproductive Sites

Alliant Lansing Bluff, Lansing IA

Location: 43.346140, -91.193744

Site visits: 3/05, 3/20, 3/21, 5/15, 6/05

Dave Kester rappelled down and found one addled egg. Two falcons were on site and active.

Leo's Bluff, Harper's Ferry IA

Location: 43.165179, -91.178797

Site visits: 3/22, 5/31, 6/10

Dave Kester descended to check a pothole that John Stravers thought might be active. He found prey remains and mutes, but no young, eggs, or scrape. He checked the nest box, which was also empty. Amy descended the cliff off a promising point, but also found nothing. No falcons were seen or heard during the four descents we made.

Bellevue State Park, Bellevue IA

We were very disappointed when this site failed. Falcons were seen chasing bald eagles, perching in a cedar snag, and possibly feeding young in the nest box during a visit on 5/14. But when Dave Kester and John Howe arrived to band on June 4, they saw no falcons whatsoever. After two hours of watching below the bluff, they declared the site inactive. No falcons were seen during a follow-up survey on June 23.

Location: 42.247843, -90.417145

Site visits: 2/27, 4/13, 5/14, 6/4, 6/23

12-Mile Bluff, Dairyland Power, Alma WI

While Power paired with mate Kiwi and laid four eggs in the new stack nest box, none of her eggs hatched. One egg disappeared around April 28 and both parents seemed to stop regular incubation not long after that. Power was seen up on the cliff nest box in mid-July, but we were not able to verify whether she reclutched.

Year falcons first nested: 1997 | Total number of young produced (2018): 71 | Total sites in complex: 4

Platte River Complex, Potosi/Tennyson, WI

Bill Smith and Mark Blackbourn saw a male and female falcon here on March 15th and things looked hopeful, but follow up visits on April 18 and May 18 turned up nothing, leaving us to conclude that the site failed. We had several failures given the unusually cold period this spring, so we are hopeful the site will be productive for the first time next year!

Location: 42.63, -90.67

Site visits: 3/15, 4/18, 5/18

Bald Eagles

Decorah Bald Eagles

Fans referred to 2018 as our season of tears and triumphs. Mom and Dad produced three young eaglets this year. Despite inclement weather and late snowstorms, the super-duo kept their eaglets warm, dry, and well-fed. But we were crushed when Dad disappeared after a snowstorm on April 18th. Volunteers scoured the area, searching along the path, in the cornfield, down the trail, and along roads. The Decorah Fire Department brought in a drone with infra-red sensing technology to help us find him. But it was all for naught. While our eagle panel had some thoughts on how he disappeared - <http://bit.ly/2DduMRn> - we will never truly know what happened. Dad disappeared from our lives as quickly and mysteriously as he had entered them.



Mom and Dad protecting the eaglets on April 18

What about the eaglets? They were just barely able to thermoregulate, but the worst of the winter weather was over, N2B was directly across the street from a nearly endless supply of food, and Mom was caring for them. We couldn't bring ourselves to even ask about taking her eaglets away. "Trust the eagles!" Bob used to say...and we did! Mom was able to bring all three eaglets – Dad's last legacy - to fledge by herself.

While Mom did all the work by herself, she wasn't exactly alone. Another male eagle appeared in the area around the time that Dad disappeared. While Mom didn't welcome him (or even allow him into N2B), he stayed in the area – hanging out on the Y-Branch at N1, perching on the maple, and keeping other eagles away. He didn't help care for the eaglets, but he never acted aggressively towards them and we all assumed that Mom would take the new male as a mate this fall. However, a new male showed up in late summer and displaced DM. As of this writing, Mom has accepted the new male as her mate and the two are busy working on nestorations and bonding. We're very curious to see what egg-timing will look like this year, since new mates can push egg-laying back in the first year. However, Mom is still on her territory and the pair seem to have established a strong bond. We'll see what happens in February!

2018 also marked the year that we left IBM Video/Ustream entirely. We had a good partnership with them and wish them nothing but the best as they move forward. The eagles can be watched ads-free on our website at <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/decorah-eagles/> or at Explore.org at <https://explore.org/livecams/raptor-resource-project/decorah-eagles>.

Egg-Laying

- Egg #1: 2/21/18 @ 7:28 PM CT
- Egg #2: 2/24/18 @ 5:48 PM CT
- Egg #3: 2/28/18 @ 6:36 PM CT

Fledging

- 6/16/18: D30 fledged at 2:55 PM CDT
- 6/23/18: D29 fledged early in the morning
- 6/23/18: D31 fledged at 7:29 PM CDT

Hatching

- D29: 4/01/18 @ 7:25 AM CDT
- D30: 4/02/18, first glimpse @ 7:33 PM CDT
- D31: 4/04/18 @ 11:44 PM CDT

Camera/Mic cleaning, replacement, and upgrades

- September 17 – September 29

Bald Eagles

Decorah North Bald Eagles

It was another tough year for the Decorah North Bald Eagles. Mrs. North laid one egg on February 25, 2018 – a lot later than we were expecting given her egg-laying history. We were also surprised when she only laid one egg. Could her fertility be declining? We were even more surprised when that egg broke in the early morning hours of March 16th. Board member Jim Robison assured us that she would reclutch and she did – almost a month later! She laid one egg on April 12th and another on April 15th. The eggs hatched on May 18th and May 20th. We were thrilled by the prospect of a productive nest, but both eaglets died on May 25th after a day of unseasonable heat, little wind, and swarming blackflies.

Both eagles appeared to stay on site, giving us hope for next season. But the nest fell from the tree during a torrential rainstorm in mid-August. We surveyed the site and found that the nest tree itself was still intact, although some limbs were down and a number of dead trees had fallen. Kike Arnal, Amy Ries, John Howe, David Kester, and Aislinn Lee built a starter nest for the eagles in September and they appear to have taken to it. Eagles have been seen working on the nest, copulating, and chasing other eagles – a very good sign!

So why are we saying ‘eagles’ instead of Mr. and Mrs. North? Although we thought we were looking at the Norths, both of the eagles lack the distinctive white pantaloon feathers we used to ID them. It’s not impossible that they molted out and were replaced by dark feathers, although unusually colored feathers can stay through adult molt. We’re trying to get iris and foot scale details for ID here.

Egg-Laying

- First Clutch
 - Egg #1: 2/25/18 @ 11:04 PM CTThe first egg failed in the early morning hours of March 16th.
- Second Clutch
 - Egg #1: 4/12/18 @ 3:20 PM CDT
 - Egg #2: 4/15/18 @ 1:16 PM CDT

Hatching

- DN7: 5/18/18 @ 7:04 AM CDT
- DN8: 5/20/18 @ 10:11 PM CDT

Nest building, Camera/Mic cleaning, replacement, and upgrades

- September 17 – September 29



Kike working on the starter nest

Bald Eagles

Xcel Energy Fort St. Vrain Bald Eagles

We are very happy to report that the Fort St. Vrain eagles were successful this year! In September, we worked with Bill Heston and Tina Lopez to clean the cameras! The job went very smoothly and we really appreciate their help!

One of interesting things about multiple cameras is the ability to compare different eagle pairs, soft materials, the timing of events, and behaviors. That cam can be watched on our website at <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/xcel-energy-cams/> or at Xcel's site at http://birdcam.xcelenergy.com/cams/eagle_top.

Egg-Laying

- Egg #1: February 12, 2018 @ 10:08PM
- Egg #2: February 15, 2018 @ 9:34PM
- Egg #3: February 19, 2018 @ 5:23PM

Hatching

- Hatch #1: FSV36 - 3/24/18 @ 9:45 PM
- Hatch #2: FSV37 - 3/25/18 @ 12:27 PM
- Hatch #3: FSV38 - 3/27/18 @ 7:00 PM

Camera/Mic cleaning, replacement, and upgrades

- August 22 – August 26



Hawk Hill Banding Station

Hawk Hill Banding Station

A [Conservation Education Program](#) grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources allowed Luther College and the Decorah Raptor Resource Project to build an autumn migration banding station on campus to collect data, provide field-based research opportunities, and deliver environmental education to youth. The banding station, located on Hawk Hill on the northeast edge of the Luther campus, is large enough for classes to observe wild birds, band them, and gather data before releasing them back into the wild. The station was manned by master banders David Kester and John Stravers. Emily Neal worked with Luther College, Upper Iowa College, and local schools and homeschooling families to arrange field-based outreach opportunities and deliver environmental education.



In 2018, we hired six Luther College students and an additional intern to help trap 62 birds of prey from six species.

Species	Hatch Year	After Hatch Year
Red-tailed Hawk	35	12
Cooper's Hawk	4	3
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	2	3
Broad-Winged Hawk	1	0
Northern Goshawk	1	0
Bald Eagle	1	0

David Kester and Emily Neal, our two principles on the project, delivered our environmental education program to 375 K-2 public students in the Decorah area and gave field trips to 12 home-schooled students. We also increased our college visits over last year: in addition to our interns, 85 college students - three classes from Luther and two classes from Upper Iowa University - visited the blind. The Hawk Hill Banding Station has been very successful in gathering research data, providing field-based research opportunities, and delivering environmental education to youth. Our Board has committed to funding more research in the years to come! You can follow our station here:

<https://www.raptorresource.org/about-us/hawk-hill-banding-station/>



Get in Touch!

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

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Non-profit ratings

Guidestar

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

Great Non-Profits

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