

Raptor Resource Project News

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

John Howe
RRP Director

Amy, John, and Brenda at Great River Energy site

Please accept a big thank you for your part in helping the Raptor Resource Project to succeed. Whether you are a raptor fan, teacher, landowner, partner, or volunteer, we could not do what we do without your help and support. You have been here right beside us for the short term ... and for the long term. Your involvement, dedication, and care are critical to our mission of conserving raptors and igniting a passion for conservation in people around the world.

Short Term Success: I'm very proud of the success and teamwork of our peregrine falcon monitoring program. Our team banded 80 falcons at 29 sites in 2021, which was a record for us! Each year we scan the bluffs of the Mississippi River for falcon activity and signs of nesting. Falcons typically return to the same nesting site each year, but that is not a given. The discovery of new nesting pairs is very exciting and evidence of the population's growth. We also love our urban/industrial nesting sites, where it seems like our partners are constantly rising to the challenge of changing sites, changing times, and changing values. For example, Great River Energy built an innovative pole-mounted nest box when the turbine building that housed the existing nest box was torn down. It has produced eight peregrine falcons since 2020 and is being adopted by other companies to help keep the peregrine population strong. Read our 2021 banding report to

learn more about what we did this year: raptorresource.org/raptorresource/pdf/2021BandingReport.pdf

The Raptor Resource Project is especially invested in monitoring the health and productivity of the Midwest peregrine falcon population. Decades of monitoring show that peregrine falcon migration and nesting patterns are shifting along with the climate. Nesting in the Upper Midwest begins earlier than it did several decades ago, and we see impacts on productivity from insect pests that are connected to flooding and warmer weather patterns.

Long Term Success: The amazing re-introduction and comeback of the peregrine falcon is a conservation success story that everyone should hear. It is a story of tremendous commitment and cooperation that played out over decades. In short, we now have a healthy and stable population of peregrine falcons thanks to the care and dedication of many. As a result of that success, we are fortunate to be at a point where our primary job is to monitor the health of the population.

Education: Whether it be second graders following the bald eagle lifecycle in the classroom or college science students learning to trap, monitor, and release Midwest raptors, our program is helping

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PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: Volunteers and Landowners

We couldn't do what we do without the help and support of our volunteers and landowners. RRP camera operators and moderators create community, document and share important moments, and introduce countless people to the magic of raptors and the places they live. Landowners network, share information and stories, care for the plants and animals on their properties, and let us band the falcons that live on their cliffs. We asked a few of them why they volunteered and what drove them to make a difference. These are their responses.

Tulsaducati Decorah: Lead Moderator, Decorah Eagles Chat

I started watching the Decorah eagles in 2013 and was hooked instantly! I was thrilled with the opportunity to be part of the community of naturalists and bird enthusiasts. I place tremendous value on the work of RRP and related organizations that I support, in a time when we so need a shared sense of purpose and community. In volunteering for RRP I have learned not only about birds and the natural world, but also about myself, and about the people I've been lucky enough to get to know. My favorite thing, other than of course Mom and DM2 Decorah, is the feeling of community and shared passion that we all have, working together to try to make the world a better place. I treasure the friendships

that I've developed with RRP, mods, and our faithful chatters. It has been life-changing for me and for many others.

Glogdog: Lead Moderator, Decorah Eagles Chat

My first chat in the moderator role was on Super Bowl Sunday, February 2, 2014. I volunteer for RRP because I believe in their mission. They are "living" their words in the RRP mission statement, making a difference in the world for raptors, and teaching people about them. This is a group of people that love what they are doing because they have a passion for it. I want to be a part of that difference.

My favorite thing is touching lives. Touching those that live alone, touching those that are in nursing homes, touching young minds in schools, touching hearts that need healing or a place to come to for learning and laughter, and touching those that simply love watching the beauty, strength, and courage of Bald Eagles. Volunteering takes a village. We learn, share, and care...together. That is what it's all about.

Izzysamlikeseagles: Lead Moderator, Flyway Chat

Like so many of us, I fell in love with the Decorah eagles at first sight. I learned so much from the mods and chatters and was thrilled to be asked to join the squad in 2014. I thought it would be

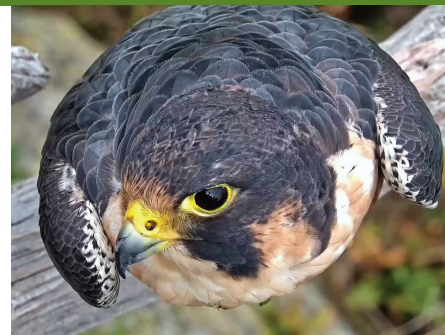
Message from the Director, continued...

connect the human and animal world. Our falcon monitoring program is an unparalleled opportunity for employees and landowners, along with their friends and families, to participate in the management of the world's fastest animal. How precious is that? Looking back on the past year, I'm pleased with our raptor education program advances. Students young and old have more opportunities to watch our live cams and fall in love with bald eagles, peregrine falcons, American kestrels, and even turkey vultures!

2021 has been a year of new up-and-coming eagle stars. At the fish hatchery nest, Mom and DM2 have been off the movie set except for special appearances. I guess we are OK with them taking a break from thirteen years of our 24/7 eagle reality program. I say that reluctantly, but we've watched Mom Decorah raise 39 eaglets! We can still see her on American Eagle (Nature); The Eagles of Decorah (IPBS); America the Beautiful (NatGeo); and Eagle Power (BBC/PBS Nova) if that is any consolation. The Decorah North Nest has moved into the prime-time spot, and we have been enjoying watching and learning from them.

Our first bald eagle nest cam in partnership with Xcel Energy experienced a good year and a year of recovery. Even though we lost an egg and a newly hatched eaglet, our eagle parents,

Ma and Pa Jr. Fort Saint Vrain, adopted the rebuilt nest and fledged a healthy young male eagle—FSV44. Little did he know he would be helping the Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff study population trends, habitat use, and impacts of human disturbance on bald eagles along the state's most densely populated corridor.



Peregrine Falcon Zooey

I'll wrap up with our peregrine falcons and kestrels. 2020 was a tough year for both the WI Kestrels and the Great Spirit Bluff Falcons. We lost our female kestrel after she laid five precious eggs, and, at Great Spirit Bluff, we lost two newly banded young to great horned owls. But both nests rebounded remarkably and showed their resilience. In 2021, we got to watch the hustle and bustle of five young kestrels raised and fledged at our nest in Wisconsin. At the bluff, Zooey treated us to never-before-seen footage of a second-year falcon/first time mother laying her first eggs and learning how to care for her young. We are so lucky to have these windows into the raptor world! Here's to a productive year ahead with more success stories to share!



a fun thing to do for a season or two. But here I am, still modding at Decorah and the flyway, and loving every minute of it. I absolutely love how RRP has enabled us to continue to learn about nature and share our knowledge with anyone who loves to learn. We have the best chatters and volunteers in the business, and I am so grateful to be a part of what has become a second family to me.

Dave Reynolds: Raptor Resource Project Lead Camera Operator

I've been watching the Decorah Eagles since 2011 but decided to see what chat was all about during the 2013-2014 season. I was hooked! In 2017, I won a day at Central Command and became a camera operator. Chat moderator EagleFanDave taught me to trust the Eagles, which is not always an easy task, but I try!

It is easy to do volunteer work when you believe in what and who you are volunteering for. I didn't get to see an eagle growing up. Now they are a part of my life. I believe in the education and research that RRP stands for and the work that they are doing, and that is why I volunteer. I love to operate the cameras, but I think my favorite thing is working with John and the other cam operators. Whatever the future holds, we are learning. It is enjoyable working with people who make that happen and I am proud to say I volunteer for RRP!

Spish: Raptor Resource Project Camera Operator

I was a camera operator with explore.org when I got hooked watching fluffballs DN4, DN5, and DN6. I started learning more about the magnificent bald eagle and Bob Anderson's work. Love, heartbreak, hope, triumph, awe, sheer persistence: so many emotions we go through while watching these amazing raptors! I feel proud to help showcase raptors in the best way possible, keeping raptor life as real as it can be for viewers around the world. However small a step we take in the right direction, everything counts.

Volunteering is my way to give back to society and support the environmental issues I am passionate about. It has connected me to a larger group of like-minded people across the world. I get to

follow raptors close and live vicariously with them and with their neighbors. Nothing else makes me as relaxed or as happy.

Rich King: Landowner

Rich is a regional biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the eight-state Midwest region. He works with staff from national wildlife refuges and wetland management districts to maximize conservation delivery for waterfowl, other migratory birds, and endangered species.

I got involved with the Raptor Resource Project when Bob Anderson contacted me many years to discuss raptor conservation opportunities in the Mississippi River Valley. I met Dave Kester while using raptor banding for an outdoor education program. When my wife Lori and I bought our property and realized we had nesting falcons, reaching out to RRP was a given. Personally, my favorite thing about my falcons is my grandchildren looking forward to banding the eyasses with great anticipation. Professionally, my favorite thing is knowing that the falcons nesting on cliffs in the Mississippi River Valley is the culmination of Bob Anderson's vision and a direct result of the Raptor Resource Project's conservation efforts.

I wish that people better understood the connection between some everyday choices they make and their impacts on wildlife. The use of pesticides and their impacts on raptors is a classic example. Even small decisions can have a big impact on wildlife and wild lands. I would really like to see people further develop their appreciation for the area's geography, history, and wildlife and turn that appreciation into conservation action.

Note: If you have peregrine falcons on your bluff property, please feel welcome to reach out to us! We'd love to talk to you. Please email Amy Ries at amy@raptorresource.org. Interested in preserving the bluffs, farmlands, wetlands, prairies, or streams on your land? Check out your local Land Trust Organization.



FIELD UPDATES: Falcon Banding



Dave Kester at Effigy Mounds

After 2020's masks, gloves, and site limitations, it felt good to get out in the field, band falcons, and see old friends again. We banded 80 falcons at 29 sites in four states this year: a record for us! 11 sites were on cliffs, 9 were at power plants, 4 were at grain mills, 4 were on buildings, and one was on a water tower at 3M. We couldn't band at two sites because the falcons were too old, which means the start

date for our season will likely be pushed even earlier next year.

Overall production was high, but per-nest production was a little lower than it was last year: an average of 2.75 falcons per nest compared with 3.12 last year. Why so many falcons if per nest production was lower? Almost all our sites were successful, we added one new site, and two old sites that hadn't been productive in years were active in 2021. We think that the warm, dry weather and lack of blackflies contributed to the success of those two sites and others like them. Hippoboscids flies were more common and probably caused two falcon deaths: one at Xcel High Bridge and one at Guider's Bluff. While hippoboscids aren't usually fatal, large numbers of them can kill nestlings.

While we don't band falcons until mid-to-late-May, our season starts in late February and continues through mid-June. Most of our sites require a lot of observation to determine where falcons are—they don't always nest in the same place—and what their nest chronology looks like. We check nestlings for ectoparasites and black fly bites, treat them as needed, evaluate overall health, band them, and put them back in the nest box or eyrie. If you see a peregrine band in the Midwest, even if it's on a dead peregrine, please report it! Your observations help all of us working with peregrines to understand the movement, survival, and behavior of the falcons we band. They let us learn about the challenges falcons face, how bird species are doing overall, and how to manage and care for birds on a rapidly changing planet. To learn more about how our eagles, falcons, and kestrels did in 2021, please read our banding report: raptorresource.org/raptorresource/pdf/2021Newsletter.pdf



Amy Ries at Castle Rock

2021 Nest Work

We divide our year into two big seasons: falcon banding season and nest work/camera season. While John is always thinking about and testing cameras, our field season runs from late August through about mid-December. This year, we cleaned cameras at N2B and N1, built a starter nest at N1, replaced three cameras and a microphone at Decorah North, established a potential back-up eagle nest at another undisclosed location in the Decorah area, replaced a camera at Great Spirit Bluff, got the Eagle Valley stream and Missouri turkey vultures back online, added a backup camera and microphone to the Xcel Energy Fort St. Vrain nest, replaced the nest box at US Bank and put that box online, started streaming Red Wing Grain again, and worked on an osprey cam that we'll be talking about in April. A thousand questions and demands inform our decisions and each project brings new challenges, new opportunities, and new needs.

The Decorah Eagles kicked off a wildlife cam revolution that continues today. We are always thinking about new ways to bring the magic of eagles, falcons, and other raptors to people around the world, especially knowing that our future leaders in conservation are learning from and watching with us today. Thank you so much for supporting our raptors and everything we do to bring them to you.



John Howe and Kike Arnal doing eagle cam work

LEAVING A LEGACY...



Has watching the Decorah Eagles, the Decorah North Eagles, the Great Spirit Bluff Falcons, or the Mississippi Flyway made a difference in your life? A legacy gift has a profound impact on how we fulfill our mission and is a tribute to your care for the wildlife, wild places, and friends you've come to love. We know that the excitement and joy of watching eagles and falcons raise their young can be a motivational factor to get up every day. It is humbling to know that bringing bald eagles and our other raptors to the public can have such an impact on people's lives, friendships, and families. If you are interested in leaving a lasting legacy, contact our planned giving representative and Board member Jeff Worrell at 651-212-3026 or jeffw@raptorresource.org.

In memoriam

Toni Lorenz left us a legacy in August of 2020. She began watching in 2018—the year that Dad disappeared—and loved Mom's tender, fierce care of her young. We were honored to meet her and her friends at the hatchery and we will not forget her commitment, dedication, or courage.

We said goodbye to **Decorah North** lead moderator BremerBirdFan this fall. Bremer was a well-loved moderator who had been volunteering with RRP since 2011. She started with the Decorah Eagles chat and went on to lead the Decorah North Eagles chat in 2018. Chatters especially remembered her enthusiasm and sense of wonderment, particularly in her last year at the Decorah North nest. We're going to miss her.



ROBERT ANDERSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Bob at Minnesota Power's Clay Boswell Plant

The Raptor Resource Project created the Robert Anderson Memorial Scholarship Fund to honor our founder's passion for raptors and to support students on their way to environmental conservation careers. We awarded our third scholarship of \$1,500 to Faye Duster, a student in Luther College's Environmental Studies program. What a wonderful way to honor Bob's lasting legacy!

The scholarship fund is managed by the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, awarded to students at Luther College, and funded by your contributions, bequests, charitable trust remainders, and other gifts directed to the Fund. Recipients are selected for positive environmental activism, environmentally focused community involvement, or independent studies and projects related to environmentalism. To donate to the Robert Anderson Memorial Scholarship Fund, contact the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa at 319-287-9106 or go to cfneia.org/robertanderson-scholarship.



DN13 and DN14 at the Decorah North Nest



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SHOP OUR MERCHANDISE

Show your love for the Decorah Eagles, Decorah North Eagles, Mississippi Flyway, and Great Spirit Bluff—with our new mugs and Christmas ornaments at: <https://www.raptorresource.org/support-the-raptor-resource-project/merchandise/> or go to our website and click 'Shop' at top right, next to Donate and Subscribe. In addition to RRP-created products, you will find photographic prints, books, apparel, beautiful mugs, ornaments, and notecards. All proceeds go to benefit the Raptor Resource Project. Watch our website and Facebook page for more details!

