

Raptor Resource Project 2023 Peregrine Falcon Monitoring Report



Director's Message



I'm pleased to present the Raptor Resource Project's annual report covering a remarkable year. We live in a unique era where some of the fundamental forces driving raptor behavior are in flux. Climate change is influencing seasonal transitions, including egg-laying and migration timing with the Peregrine Falcons we monitor. Our research is also opening a window into the far-reaching effects of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), which is fatal to most raptors. Long-term monitoring programs like ours are important since they help us understand stresses on raptor populations and how they impact behavior and health.

Despite the challenges posed by climate change and avian influenza, we banded a record 81 peregrine falcons this year. We monitor impacts on the peregrine falcon population with pre-nest season surveys, focused banding of young, and follow-up monitoring. We expanded our field research programs this year to collect bodily fluid and blood samples for HPAI analysis by The Raptor Center and Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Monitoring the health and well-being of raptors is challenging in this time of change, but time and careful research will reveal how lasting the effects of HPAI will be and perhaps give us tools to fight it.

Opportunities arise in the wondrous world of Bald Eagles in Decorah, IA. We were treated to a season like no other with the first nesting of Hatchery Mom and Hatchery Dad in a starter nest that we rebuilt in the fall of 2021; the remarkable survival of their second nestling DH2; a micro-burst storm that nearly took down the nest tree; and a successful fledge. We also monitored the unsuccessful nesting season of Mom Decorah and her mate DM2 in new nest N4 along the Upper Iowa River. At the Decorah North Nest, we observed an atypical nesting season when resident female DNF laid one egg instead of her usual two. We believe we witnessed the results of a nesting female exhibiting territorial behavior. DNF did her best to keep intruder adult eagles away while Mr. North did his best to incubate his precious egg to hatch. Unfortunately, he couldn't incubate the egg by himself, and it froze and cracked. We hope for a more normal nesting season in 2024.

Director's Message

Our Golden Eagle monitoring and tracking program expanded in 2023 with the addition of five more eagles wintering in the Driftless area. We have assembled a team to trap and transmit at least four more adult Golden Eagles in 2024. Our Golden Eagle partners have been spending summer in Nunavut, Canada near Hudson Bay and the Northwest Passage! Every day is an exciting day as we learn more about these powerful and mysterious raptors.

I love the wide-ranging coverage of our raptor education programs that span from kindergarten to college students. Our collaborative hands-on raptor monitoring station with Luther College has expanded to the Mississippi River and two stations have provided double the access for training and research, giving high school and college students the unique experience to hold a live raptor, examine and study it, and release it to the wild. In the classroom, our Education-in-Action program is used by teachers across the country and around the globe! Our future leaders in raptor conservation surround us. Each class of students we introduce to life in an eagle nest or the beauty of a buteo moves us along in our goal of engaging and developing our future conservationists.

We are truly meeting our mission of education, conservation, and research. A heartfelt thanks to our volunteer moderators, cam operators, videographers, partners, and donors. Our live streams, education programs, and research would not be possible without you! Here's to an exciting year of raptor research and discovery in 2024!

John Howe

Director, Raptor Resource Project

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Peregrine Production 2023 By State: RRP Sites

State	Number of Active and Total Sites	Production in 2023	Total Production, All Years
Minnesota	11 / 21	36	932
Iowa	7 / 9	16	154
Wisconsin	8 / 19	29	552
Totals	26 / 46	81	1,638

In 2023, peregrine falcons at 26 Raptor Resource Project sites produced 81 young, a record for us! Eleven sites were on cliffs, eight were on power plants, three were on grain mills, three were on buildings in the cities of Duluth, MN; La Crosse, WI; and Dubuque, IA, and one was on a water tower in Cottage Grove, MN.

2023 was relatively uneventful. We added three sites in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, although two of them failed, most likely due to predation. The third, Muscatine Power and Water, was established by Bob Anderson and Pat Schlarbaum in the 1990s. Technically, it wasn't new, but this is the first time that we've banded there, and Muscatine P&W was wonderful to work with. We look forward to coming back!

Owl predation took a heavy toll at Great Spirit Bluff, while unknown predators wiped out V-Bluff and quite possibly Maiden Rock. Blackfly strikes were not an issue this year, although we squished a few feather lice and some chicken fleas. We did not find HPAI virus or antibodies in any of the falcons we tested this spring, but HPAI killed a migratory adult in Dubuque and a resident adult in Winona and may claim more falcons before migration ends this fall. A special thanks to The Raptor Center and Rachel Ruden from the Iowa DNR for helping us to test nestlings and adults at our sites. It was wonderful to collaborate with everyone and we hope to do more with both groups in the future.

Captive breeding and releases brought the peregrine falcon back from the brink of extinction. Your good stewardship and enthusiasm have helped it to thrive. Thank you everyone for all that you have done. Long may the peregrine falcon fly!



Xcel Energy Ashland Plant: Ashland, Ashland County WI



Adult Data

Adult female: M/31 'Penny', a 2020 hatch from Briess Malt & Ingredients Company in Manitowoc, WI
 Adult male: 59/C 'Scottie', a 2016 hatch from the Houghton-Hancock Bridge in Houghton, MI

Nesting Data

Hatch began: June 4 | Banding date: June 22 | Site visits: June 22

It was another interesting year at Ashland! In 2021, Penny nested with Scottie 59/C and hatch began on May 31st, which is late but typical for this site. In 2022, Penny nested with an unbanded male and hatch didn't begin until June 18th, which is quite late. This year, Scottie returned and the two resumed their typical schedule, with hatch beginning on about June 4th. So what happened to Scottie last year? Since we have no records of him in rehabilitation, we assume that the unbanded male drove Scottie off last year and Scottie returned to vanquish him this year. Falcon caretaker Lynn Hall was extremely excited when we got Scottie's band number, and it was great to band with her again!

Lynn worked with a local school this year to introduce students to Ashland's falcons. The children learned about the history of peregrine falcon recovery nationally and in Wisconsin and got to name the falcons. They did a wonderful job!

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Poppy	Female	V/98	1947-50630
Lightning	Female	V/99	1947-50631
Dash	Male	27/U	1266-07989
Jet	Male	28/U	1266-07990

Year falcons first nested: 2014 | Total number of young produced (2023): 31

Wisconsin

Dairyland Power Alma Complex: Alma, Buffalo County WI



Adult Data

Adult female: 89/H bl/blue, a 2015 hatch from Midwest Plaza in Minneapolis, MN | Adult male: unbanded

Nesting Data

Hatch began: April 26 | Banding date: May 19 | Site visits: May 19

We monitored this site by camera. 89/H laid four eggs beginning on March 18: 11 days earlier than last year. All four falcons hatched between April 26th and April 28th and fledged began on June 7th. All four falcons had fledged by June 10 and as nest observer Nora noted, 'the parents had their wings full!'. Watch the Dairyland Power falcons here: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/dairyland-power-falcon-cams/>

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Salem	Female	P/44	1947-35566
Panther	Female	P/47	1947-35567
Piper	Female	P/48	1947-35568
Norman	Male	B/51	1266-35568

Year falcons first nested: 1997 | Total number of young produced (2023): 91 | Sites in complex: 3

Wisconsin

US Bank: City of La Crosse, La Crosse County WI



Adult Data

Adult female: 44/P Karen, a 2016 hatch from Minnesota Power's Boswell Energy Center in Cohasset, MN

Adult male: 06/D Ardy, a 2015 hatch from Ardent Milling in Lake City, MN

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 10 | Banding date: June 1 | Site visits: June 1

We monitored this site by camera. 44/P laid four eggs beginning on April 4. Three of them hatched between May 10th and May 11th and local watcher klhfarrow confirmed fledge beginning on June 21, although it may have started a few days earlier. Poppy and Melody were named by children at the banding, which attracted quite a crowd!

Last year we saw a six-day gap between egg number two and three. This year, Karen laid a more typical three days apart, although once again only three of her four eggs hatched. *Watch the US Bank falcons here:*

<https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/additional-falcon-cams/>.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Poppy	Female	H/52	1947-50660
Melody	Female	H/53	1947-50661
Bailey	Female	H/54	1947-50662

Year falcons first nested: 2006 | Total number of young produced (2023): 47

Wisconsin

Castle Rock: Bluff Siding, Buffalo County WI

Adult Data

Adult female: 84/M, a 2016 hatch from a cliff in Hastings, MN | Adult male: Unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 18 | Banding date: June 3 | Site visits: March 8, March 15, March 27, April 10, April 24, May 8, June 3, June 21, July 10

Dave rappelled down and found four healthy eyasses about 16 days of age. We couldn't decide whether H/58 was a male or female falcon, so we used 7A bands. One nestling head was visible near the lip of the pothole on June 21 and we saw three fledglings chasing each other on July 10.

To see what banding at Castle Rock looks like, check out this Instagram reel by Untamed Science:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/CtJs_oEN9-K/

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Emeshe	Female	H/56	1947-50664
Turul	Female	H/57	1947-50665
Haomi	Female	H/58	1947-50666
Almos	Male	B/68	1266-07974

Year falcons first nested: 2002 | Total number of young produced (2023): 44



Wisconsin

Maassen's Bluff Complex: Nelson, Buffalo County WI



Adult Data

Both adults are unbanded

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 13 | Banding date: June 6 | Site visits: March 8, March 15, March 27, April 10, April 24, May 8, June 6, June 21, July 10

John Howe rappelled down and retrieved three healthy-looking nestling falcons about 24 days of age. When we checked again from below the bluff on June 21, we didn't see any fledglings, although it was very hot and everyone was likely undercover. Amy spotted one fledgling here on July 10.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Ash	Female	H/62	1947-50667
Peter	Male	B/69	1266-07975
King	Male	B/70	1266-07976

Year falcons first nested: 2001 | Total number of young produced (2023): 38 | Sites in complex: 3

Wisconsin

Greshik's Bluff: Fountain City, Buffalo County WI



Adult Data

Both adults are unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 12

Banding date: June 8 | Site visits: March 8, March 15, March 27, April 10, April 24, May 8, June 8, June 21, July 10

Amy Ries rappelled down and found four hot, footy falcons in the nest box. H/64 was so footy that we wound a glove around her feet so she didn't accidentally injure her siblings in the kennel. This worked excellently and we will be sure to add gloves and painter's tape to our banding bag!

During a follow-up visit on June 21, Amy saw three falcons perched on the lip of the nest box.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Brenda	Female	H/64	1947-50670
Gloria	Female	H/65	1947-50671
Mark	Male	B/73	1266-07979
Speedy	Male	B/74	1266-07980

Year falcons first nested: 2008 | Total number of young produced (2023): 13

Wisconsin

Hobb's Hollow Bluff Complex: Ferryville, Crawford County WI



Adult Data

Both adults are unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 17 | Banding date: June 12 | Site visits: March 15, March 23, March 31, June 12

Despite being attacked by the extremely aggressive female falcon, John rappelled down to retrieve three healthy nestling falcons about 24 to 27 days of age. He and Dave were joined by banding station interns Mara and Janet, who were very excited to band nestling birds in the spring.

The falcons nested in a new eyrie about 10 to 15 feet upriver. It isn't uncommon for a territory to contain several nesting sites but the move, combined with the adult female's behavior, makes us think we have a new falcon this year. The resident female hasn't been this aggressive before!

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Izzy	Female	P/62	1947-50684
Mara	Female	P/63	1947-50685
Janet	Female	P/64	1947-50686

Year falcons first nested: 2021 | Total number of young produced (2023): 9 | Sites in complex: 3

Wisconsin

Twin Bluff Complex: Nelson, Buffalo County WI



Adult Data

Both adults are unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 25 | Banding date: June 19 | Site Visits: March 8, March 15, March 27, April 10, April 24, May 8, June 6, June 19, July 10

We weren't sure what we were going to find when we got to Twin Bluff this year! We've typically banded around June 6th but last year, when Amy rappelled down to check the nest box, she found eggs instead of nestlings. The site was clearly active this year, but the nestlings were too young to band when we checked the box on June 6th. We were pleased to find all of them in the box and seemingly healthy on June 19th, although they were very, very hot!

We're looking forward to seeing what they do next year. Last year was almost certainly a second clutch, perhaps by a new female. She – assuming it is the same bird, which we don't know – moved her schedule up a little bit this year and may go even earlier next year!

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Lorrie	Female	V/91	1947-50679
Ruth	Female	V/92	1947-50680
Marge	Female	V/93	1947-50681
Sparky	Male	26/U	1266-07988

Year falcons first nested: 2014 | Total number of young produced (2023): 33 | Sites in complex: 2

Muscatine Power and Water: Muscatine, Muscatine County



Adult Data

Both adults are unbanded

Nesting Data

Hatch began: April 24 | Banding date: May 31 | Site visit: May 31

While falcons have nested at Muscatine Power and Water for several years, this is the first time we banded there. Falcon caretaker Robert has done an excellent job caring for the falcons and the nest box, and it was wonderful to reconnect with a site from very early on in the Bob Anderson/Pat Schlarbaum days! Robert, Dave, and Amy climbed the stack to find a small but healthy almost fledgling male in the nest box. We captured him and banded him, and he fledged successfully two days later.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Little Bobby	Male	B/64	1266-07970

Year falcons first nested: unknown | Total number of young banded (2023): 1

Iowa

Viserion America: McGregor, Clayton County IA

Adult Data

Both adults are unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 1 | Banding date: May 24 | Site visits: March 20, April 6, May 9, May 24

Dave and John found one nestling falcon and two addled eggs when they went up top to band. The little falcon was about 24 days old, looked very healthy, and had no parasites.

This nest box can easily be watched from Ann's Point in Pike's Peak State Park. Drive around to the back of the bluff, park in the DNR parking lot, and walk up the trail. Follow the signs to Ann's Point and you'll come to the top of the hill. Admire the stunning river scenery or train your binoculars on the nest box and see if you can get a band number! If you get a band number, let me know: amy@raptorresource.org.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Abby	Female	P/49	1947-35569

Year falcons first nested: 2010 | Total number of young produced (2023): 29

Dubuque Courthouse: Dubuque, Dubuque County IA



Adult Data

Adult female: She-Beast bl/blu D/20, a falcon that Dave Kester banded as an adult here in 2019

Adult male: Jeff bl/r 58/N, a 2013 hatch from the Savanna Silo in Savanna IL

Iowa

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 3 | Banding date: May 25 | Site visits: May 25

We monitored this site by camera and Amy was delighted to let Dave know that he would be facing She-Beast again! As usual, she bravely defended her young, which allowed Dave to capture her by hand. While Amy held her, Dave and Iowa State Wildlife Veterinarian Rachel Ruden banded the young falcons, collected blood and cloacal samples for an HPAI study, and identified the creepy-crawly ectoparasites as feather lice. It was extremely helpful to have her band with us and we hope she can join us next year!

Watch the Dubuque Courthouse falcons here: <https://www.dubuquecountyiowa.gov/385/Courthouse-Falcons>.

Thank you to Dubuque County Conservation and the courthouse for being great falcon friends!

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Rachel	Female	P/51	1947-50648
Angie	Female	P/52	1947-50649
Bankston	Male	B/52	1266-07959

Year falcons first nested: 2017 | Total number of young produced (2023): 18

Alliant Lansing Cliff: Lansing, Allamakee County IA



Adult Data

Both adults are unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 4 | Banding date: May 26 | Site visits: March 20, April 6, May 9, May 24

Iowa

Alliant Lansing was an interesting challenge this year since the power plant was being decommissioned and we didn't have a key for the bluff top. Fortunately, we managed to contact the wonderful people from Riverland Conservancy, and they gave us access at the eleventh hour. Thank you so, so much to Jessica and Dan. We really appreciate it!

John rappelled down to find three healthy falcons. They had a little bit of feather lice, so we treated them up top, took blood, cloacal, and tracheal samples, and banded them. To learn more about Riverland Conservancy, visit <https://riverlandconservancy.org/>.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Jessica	Female	P/53	1947-50650
Makee	Female	P/54	1947-50651
Forest	Male	B/53	1266-07960

Year falcons first nested: 1999 | Total number of young produced (2023): 46 | Sites in complex: 3

Guider's Bluff Complex: Lansing, Allamakee County IA



Adult Data

Adult female: H/26 'Aubrey', a 2021 hatch from Skidmore Bluff banded by John Howe

Adult male: unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 5 | Banding date: May 26 | Site visits: March 20, April 6, May 9, May 24

Amy rappelled down and found four healthy 21/22-day old nestling falcons. They had some feather lice but no hematomas and small but visible crops. We ID'd the ectoparasites, banded the falcons, and took tracheal, cloacal, and blood samples.

Iowa

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Hugh	Male	B/54	1266-07961
Enoch	Male	B/55	1266-07962
Abe	Male	B/56	1266-07963
Alma	Female	P/55	1947-50653

Year falcons first nested: 2010 | Total number of falcons produced (2023): 17 | Number of sites in complex: 2

Leo's Bluff: Yellow River State Forest, Allamakee County



Adult Data

Both adults are unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 2 | Banding date: May 26 | Site visits: Site visits: March 20, April 6, May 9, May 24

Dave rappelled down and found four healthy 22 to 24-day-old nesting falcons. As we saw at several sites, they moved quite a bit earlier this year since we found 10-day-old falcons on May 24 of last year. The young were named by a couple who was birding at the Yellow River State Forest and ended up joining us for banding!

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Fiona	Female	P/56	1947-50654
Olive	Female	P/57	1947-50655
Bronwyn	Male	B/57	1266-07964
Horace	Male	B/58	1266-07965

Year falcons first nested: 2005 | Total number of young produced (2023): 23 | Sites in complex: 4

Minnesota

Great Spirit Bluff: La Crescent, Houston County MN



Adult Data

Adult female: 40/Z Savanna, a 2019 hatch from Bank of the West in Fargo, ND

Adult male: unbanded Newman, the resident male since 2016

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 8

Banding date: May 27 | Site visit: May 27

2023 was a year of cheers and sorrows for the falcons at Great Spirit Bluff. After Newman returned on February 11th, we started to look for Zooey. While she never returned, he attracted a female named Savanna and quickly bonded with her. We saw some competition for the site, but Savanna held on to it and laid her first egg on March 29 at 8:28 PM. Three more eggs followed on April 1st, 3rd, and 5th.

Falcons instinctively respond to their offspring's vocalizations and needs, but first-time parents don't always understand how to incubate, feed, or brood young. What kind of mother would Savanna be? We waited with bated breath for her first egg to hatch. As it turned out, we had nothing to worry about. Savanna was an excellent, attentive mother from the very beginning! She diligently brooded her little nestlings without rubbing away their fluffy white down, fed them tiny morsels of flesh instead of dropping whole birds on them, and protected them from the weather. Her four little falcons grew strong and healthy under her care.

The nestlings' prodigious appetites and loud squees kept both parents on their talons and sometimes had us reaching for the mute button as the little falcons ate and grew and ate and grew and ate and grew some more! We banded them on May 27, just a few days before their brown and cream juvenile feathers began poking through their fluffy white down. But tragedy struck on June 12th when an owl killed Savanna. She died fiercely protecting

Minnesota

her young, an amazing falcon mother to the very end of her life. We've seen falcons die before, but we were crushed. We had hoped to watch her for many more years to come.

After Savanna's death, Newman continued to care for Thomas, Alice, Kami, and Jaycie by himself. He kept all four nestlings fed – no small feat for a single peregrine parent! – and perched near the nest box at night. We cheered each fledge and crossed our fingers as we checked the nestbox each morning. As Thomas (named after John's Dad), Alice (named after John's Mom), Kami, and Jaycie approached fledge, they began 'branching'. When I asked John about his favorite GSB moments, he told me he loved seeing the little falcons navigate and hop around the bluff before their first flights. I loved their strong family bonds, sibling squadron aerial chases, and afternoon cuddle naps on the nest box! It was wonderful to watch them learn and explore their wild blue world.

And then the owl came back. Since the falcons fledged, we know at least two of them were taken by an owl, presumably the same one that killed Savanna. We've also seen and heard Newman tending to one young falcon, so we know at least one of them survived...and possibly two, since some watchers report they've heard two juvenile falcons vocalizing. Our fingers are crossed that we'll see Thomas and Kami again, and we'll never forget Savanna.

Watch the Great Spirit Bluff falcons here: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/gsb-falcons/>.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Alice	Female	P/58	1947-50656
Kami	Female	P/59	1947-50657
Jaycie	Female	P/60	1947-50658
Thomas	Male	B/59	1266-07966

Year falcons first nested: 2005 | Total number of young produced (2023): 52



Minnesota

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



Adult Data

Female: C/59 Faye, a 2014 hatch from Horizon Milling in Lake City, MN

Male: K/59 Mikey, a 2015 hatch from the Ford Parkway Bridge in Minneapolis, MN

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 15 | Banding date: June 7 | Site visits: June 7

Our peregrine utility program started at the Allen S. King plant in 1988, when Paul Simonet, an Xcel Energy employee and falconer, told Bob Anderson that there was a falcon on site. Bob was doubtful – falcons had just returned to nesting in the wild in 1987 – but checked it out. Paul was right! Plant manager Mike Miser gave Bob permission to install a nest box on the 400’ level of the stack catwalk. In 1990, a young falcon named Mae became the first falcon to nest at a power plant. Mae nested at the King plant until 2004, when she was replaced by Belinda. Belinda was replaced by Kris in 2014 and Kris was replaced by Faye in 2020 or 2021. All four falcons have been formidable birds and the King plant currently leads Xcel’s falcon production pack with 85 falcons since 1990. It is our second-most productive site by raw numbers and our most productive by descendants.

Katherine Rask from The Raptor Center joined us to take samples. All three falcons were healthy with no ectoparasites. Watch the Allen S. King falcons here: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/xcel-energy-cams/>.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Aria	Female	H/59	1947-50668
Tanner	Male	B/71	1266-07977
Surge	Male	B/72	1266-07978

Year falcons first nested: 1990 | Total number of young produced (2023): 84

Minnesota

Xcel Energy Prairie Island: Welch, Goodhue County, MN



Adult Data

Female: *Y/*E Freya, a 2008 hatch from the Colonnade Building in St. Louis Park, MN | Male: Unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 17 | Banding date: June 8 | Site visits: June 8

John Howe, Amy Ries, Rich Lockwood, Devin Ansen, and Keith Filarsky climbed the dome to find Freya ready and waiting! She laid five eggs and one hatched. The little falcon was extremely well-fed and Frank Sperlak nailed the banding date again! Curious about the names? All Prairie Island nestlings are named after plant staff! It's a wonderful way to celebrate them.

Freya turned 15 years old in 2023 and was as aggressive as she's ever been! How long has she been nesting here? Our first record comes from 2016. We didn't get her band number, but we noted that the falcon had a very faded unreadable black/green band. She also laid five eggs, which is relatively uncommon but something that Freya does every year. We'll be curious to see what her production looks like next year, since falcons sometimes begin experiencing reduced fertility after their 14th or 15th year. We wish her the best of luck!

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Danny	Female	H/63	1947-50669

Year falcons first nested: 1997 | Total number of young produced (2023): 76

Minnesota

Xcel Energy High Bridge: St. Paul, Ramsey County, MN



Adult Data

Adult female: H/21 Joe'l, a 2021 hatch from Great River Energy in Elk River, MN

Adult male: 32/D Monte, a 2017 hatch from the Ford Parkway Bridge

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 18 | Banding date: June 13 | Site visits: June 13

We were joined by Raptor Center Medical Director Dana Franzen-Klein and Clinic Manager Hilary DeVries, who took samples and helped band the young. We found a few ectoparasites on the young falcons – feather lice and chicken fleas – but they were otherwise healthy. The falcons fledged between July 4th and July 9th and our forum members remarked that they were a blast to follow as they learned how to fly, land, and catch their own food!

Watch the Xcel Energy High Bridge falcons here: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/xcel-energy-cams/>

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Poppy	Female	V/89	1947-50626
Cloe	Female	V/90	1947-50678
Declan	Male	C/93	1266-07986
Beaker	Male	25/U	1266-07987

Year falcons first nested: 2000 | Total number of young produced (2023): 35

Minnesota

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



Adult Data

Adults are unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 19 | Banding date: June 9 | Site visits: June 9

John, Doug Braff, Michelle Oyler and Jake Lindberg climbed the stack to find four young falcons. Although they appeared healthy, Swirl's nostrils were blocked by an unknown substance, so John cleaned his beak. Watch the Hibbard falcons here: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/minnesota-power-and-light-falcons/>.

All four falcons fledged by June 28, although we were still seeing adults around the nest box as late as October 23rd.

Watch the Hibbard falcons here: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/minnesota-power-and-light-falcons/>.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Michelle	Female	H/70	1947-50672
Ceniza	Female	H/71	1947-50673
Jake	Male	21/U	1266-07981
Swirl	Male	22/U	1266-07982

Year falcons first nested: 2008 | Total number of young produced (2023): 38

Minnesota

Great River Energy: Elk River, Sherburne County, MN



Adult Data

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

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

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 7 | Banding date: May 30 | Site visit: May 30

We were joined by resident Kelsey Rayment from The Raptor Center, who took cloacal, pharyngeal, and blood samples for HPAI virus and antibody testing. Resident raptor expert Brenda Geisler is retiring and will be handing the project over to Great River Energy employee Joe'l. We look forward to working with her but will miss Brenda, who initiated the nest box project with the help of Boy Scout Daniel Sunburg back in 2006. Daniel built a nestbox for his Eagle Scout Project and Brenda had it mounted on the roof of the plant's turbine building. Great River Energy attracted a pair of falcons in 2007 and has produced falcons every year since.

When Great River Energy shut the Elk River facility down and removed the turbine building in 2019, Brenda assembled a 24-member team to build a new nest box for the falcons. After several meetings, the team decided to mount the nest box atop a 90-foot power pole stabilized by guy wires. The first of its kind that we know, pole boxes have since been adopted at other locations where stacks or turbine buildings have been removed. Enjoy your retirement, Brenda! We'll stay in touch.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Janeen	Female	H/51	1947-50659
Jesse	Male	B/60	1266-07967
Samuel	Male	B/61	1266-07968
Talon	Male	B/62	1266-07969

Year falcons first nested: 2007 | Total number of falcons produced (2023): 55

Minnesota

Red Wing Grain: Red Wing, Goodhue County, MN



Adult Data

Adult female: unbanded

Adult male: E/30 Mac, a 2013 hatch from Dairyland Power Alma

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 18 | Banding date: June 13 | Site visits: June 13

We banded four healthy little falcons at Red Wing Grain this year. They were in great shape, with full crops and some feather lice, but no blackfly bites. Amy and Calara replaced the nest box top earlier in the year and it looks great! The falcon's names were picked by children at Twin Bluff Middle School, who follow the falcons online.

Watch the Red Wing Grain falcons here: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/additional-falcon-cams/>.

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Oakley	Female	V/86	1947-50675
Sunny	Female	V/87	1947-50676
Layla	Female	V/88	1947-50677
Winger	Male	C/92	1266-07985

Year falcons first nested: 2000 | Total number of young produced (2023): 57

Minnesota

Ardent Milling: Lake City, Wabasha County MN



Adult Data

Adult female: D/89 Gianna, a 2020 hatch from the Mayo Building at the University of MN, Minneapolis

Adult male: Unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: June 1 | Banding date: June 21 | Site visits: June 21

Amy and John were joined by employee and falcon enthusiast Britta Manning, interns Torren and Serenity, and Project friends Keaton and Maddie. The weather couldn't have been nicer, and the little falcons looked great, although one was roughly three to four days younger than her siblings. Thanks to Torren and Serenity for getting the adult female's band number!

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Torren	Female	V/94	1947-50682
Serenity	Female	V/95	1947-50627
Britta	Female	V/96	1947-50628
Maddie	Female	V/97	1947-50629

Year falcons first nested: 2002 | Total number of young produced (2023): 67

Minnesota

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



Adult Data

Adults are unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 16 | Banding date: June 9 | Site visits: June 9

All three falcons were healthy and footy when Amy, Clara Ries, and John came to band them. We banded in the community room so building residents could see the nestlings. Everyone was excited and several people shared stories of watching and hearing falcons and other birds around Greysolon and in Duluth. I love this site – everyone is so excited about the falcons and it's nice to know they have so many aunties and uncles looking after them!

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

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Sunset	Female	V/85	1947-50674
Jim	Male	23/U	1266-07983
Willard	Male	24/U	1266-07984

Year falcons first nested: 2003 | Total number of young produced (2023): 57

Minnesota

Homer Bluff: Homer, Winona County MN



Adult Data

Both adults unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: May 8 | Banding date: June 1 | Site visits: March 8, March 15, March 27, April 10, April 24, May 8, June 1, June 21, July 10

What a surprise! Bill Smith and Dave Kester had spotted falcons here, but their activity was pretty sporadic, and we had falcons nesting at a new bluff barely two miles away as the falcon flies. But when John rappelled down, he discovered four healthy 23-to-25-day old falcons who weren't happy about being interrupted. We raced a storm to band and collect samples from all four and the rain started just as Amy was returning them. She rappelled up and the three of us sheltered under a tarp. Everything was soaked, but the falcons were safe!

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Dee	Female	H/55	1947-50663
Caske	Male	B/65	1266-07971
Wahbanung	Male	B/66	1266-07972
Omahanska	Male	B/67	1266-07973

Year falcons first nested: 2007 | Total number of young produced (2023): 31

Minnesota

3M: Cottage Grove, Washington County MN



Adult Data

Both adults unknown

Nesting Data

Hatch began: unknown | Banding date: July 7 | Site visits: July 7

Fortunately, Amy had her banding bag when she got a call about a downed fledgling falcon at 3M. Would we like to band it? We sure would! She raced to the site to meet our contact and the two banded the falcon together while giving an impromptu presentation about 3M's peregrine falcons to every employee that walked by. Thanks for the call, Jon!

Name	Sex	Color Band	BBL Band
Agatha	Female	P/65	1947-50687

Year falcons first nested: 2008 | Total number of young produced (2023): 27

Unbanded, Unknown, Failed and Inactive Sites

Blackhawk Bluff: New Albin, Allamakee County IA

Site visits: August 11, September 9 | *Unbanded*

We've been checking this site for years but have never spotted falcons here. That changed when Seth and Kristi Vreeman spotted fledgling falcons here on August 11! There were at least two! *Photo by Seth Vreeman.*



Skidmore Bluff: Hagar City, Pierce County WI

Site visits: March 15, March 27, April 10, April 24, May 8, May 24, June 19, July 10, August 27

Status: *Unknown*

When Amy rappelled down, she found two nice brown eggs. No nestlings or fledglings were seen on subsequent visits (the pothole they nested in can be seen into from the ground). We do not know if the site was successful.

Xcel Energy Monticello: Monticello Wright County MN

Site visits: None

Status: *Unknown*

We were not able to get into Monticello this year and don't know whether the site was successful.

Xcel Energy Sherco: Becker, Sherburne County MN

Site visits: March 23

Status: *Unknown*

Amy didn't see or hear falcons during a scouting trip to Xcel Energy's Sherco plant, although the resident pair would have normally arrived by March 23. Our plant contact kept an eye out for them but didn't see falcons until fairly late in the season. We don't know whether Sherco was successful.

Lynn Hollow, Lynn Hollow Landing: Grant County WI

Site visits: March 15, April 3, April 12, May 1 & 9, June 2

Status: *Failed*

Bill Smith and Mark Blackbourn regularly observed a pair of falcons here, but when Amy came to band on June 2, they were gone. She found a shallow scrape and some whitewash, but no sign of young, no shell fragments, and very little trampling. It looks like falcons attempted to nest, so we're listing the site as failed.

Unbanded, Unknown, Failed and Inactive Sites

Maiden Rock: Maiden Rock State Bluff Natural Area, Pepin County WI

Site visits: March 8, March 15, March 27, April 10, April 24, May 8, June 6

Status: *Failed*

Dave and Amy descended to two different places. Amy found a blurry scrape with what looked like nestling slices on the back wall, but no young and no defense by adults. Based on what she found and observed during surveys, falcons nested and hatched eggs, but something happened to the young and the site failed.

V-Bluff: Homer, Winona County MN

Site visits: March 13, June 2, June 19

Status: *Failed*

The falcons were too young to band when we arrived on June 2, so we came back on June 19. All we found were scattered pinfeathers.

Bellevue State Park: Bellevue, Jackson County Iowa

Site visits: May 25

Status: *Failed*

We had hope for this nest after local monitors reported seeing and hearing falcons and what sounded like a description of feeding activities, but it failed once again. There were no eggs, eggshell fragments, or young in the nest box. This site has only been successful once since we put the nest box up in 2013.

Xcel Energy Riverside: Minneapolis, Hennepin County MN

Site visits: May 11 | Monitored remotely via camera

Status: *Inactive*

We saw a falcon on camera on February 21, but the nest box was empty when Amy came to check it on May 11. She saw a falcon downstream near the Lowry Avenue Bridge, but could not find falcons there, either. We don't know whether the resident falcons nested successfully elsewhere, but this site was inactive.

Minnesota Power, Clay Boswell Facility: Cohasset, Itasca County MN

Site visits: Monitored remotely via camera

Status: *Inactive*

Falcons were not seen at Clay Boswell this year. We're not sure whether they ever showed up, since the camera was down for part of the season, but we didn't see anything after it came back up and local monitors reported that there were no signs of nesting activity.

Riverview Tower: Minneapolis, Hennepin County MN

Site visits: none

Status: *Inactive*

Local monitors reported occasional falcon sightings, but the local pair appears to have nested over at the Cedar-Riverside building this year. We don't know if they were successful at that location.

Effigy Mounds: Effigy Mounds National Monument, Clayton County IA

Site visits: April 5, April 26

Status: *Inactive*

We did not see or hear falcons at Fire Point this year. They might have attempted to nest across the river at Limery Ridge just north of Prairie du Chien, WI. That site did not produce young.

Redbird Bluff: Desoto, Vernon County WI

Site visits: March 23, March 29, April 6, May 7

Status: *Inactive*

Bill Smith saw a falcon on March 23, but no falcons were seen or heard after that and Rich King could not find young or eggs when he visited the site on May 7.

Bald Eagles (and Canada Geese)



Decorah Eagles

Link: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/decorah-eagles/>

HM and HD

HM (Hatchery Mom) and HD (Hatchery Dad) nested at N1 in 2023. HM laid two eggs beginning on February 25. DH1 hatched on April 5 and DH2 hatched on April 6. DH1 died not long after hatch, but DH2 survived. It fledged on July 31, 84 days after hatch, and dispersed in late August.

Unfortunately, HD and HM are currently building another nest in the hatchery area. We are considering our options and will continue to report on their activities and watch them as best we can from our existing cameras.

- A new nest in Decorah: <https://www.raptorresource.org/2023/11/08/a-new-nest-in-decorah/>
- 2023 Decorah Eagles Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeNR2ocnlCOe7e-93en529KV6i26UWA17>

Mom and DM2

Mom and her mate DM2 built nest N3 behind the Decorah-area Walmart in the fall of 2020. They nested there until July 23 of this year, when their nest was destroyed by a storm. They built replacement nest N4 nearby and were present all year long, but do not appear to have had young. They are still nesting on private land that we can't access, but volunteer Robin Brumm has been reporting on them.

- Day Trips to Decorah: <https://www.raptorresource.org/?s=Day+Trip>

Bald Eagles (and Canada Geese)

The Canada Geese

Canada Geese nested at N2B for the second year in a row. Mother Goose laid six eggs, all six hatched, and five goslings survived the 70-foot jump. We hope to see them again in the spring of 2024!

- <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/decorah-geese-cam/>

Decorah North Eagles

Link: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/decorah-north-nest/>

Mrs. North laid her first egg on February 20. Unfortunately, the Decorah North Eagles were dealing with a lot of intruders. Between February 20 and March 12, we documented at least five adult and subadult intruders at the North nest on 11 out of 20 days. They followed Mr. North to the nest, perched in nearby trees, flew by the nest, attempted to steal food, and generally disturbed nesting activities. On February 23 – the day that DNF would normally have laid her second egg – she spent much of the day chasing intruders away. Prior to that, her incubatory behavior was relatively normal. After that, she stopped incubating her lone egg and did not lay another.

Mr. North continued to incubate until March 21, when their lone egg broke. The two did not recycle.

- The North's egg has broken: <https://www.raptorresource.org/2023/03/24/the-norths-egg-has-broken/>
- Nest guarding and intraspecific intrusions: <https://www.raptorresource.org/2023/03/16/nest-guarding-and-intraspecific-intrusions/>

Xcel Energy Fort St. Vrain Bald Eagles

Link: <https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/xcel-energy-cams/>

Ma FSV laid her first egg on March 2, her second on March 5, and her third on March 8. Two eggs hatched on April 10 and April 14. The third did not hatch.

Last year, Pa Jr. was a first-time mate and father. As we've seen at our other bald eagle nests, he tried to provide food and care for young, but sometimes struggled to do so. He had the instincts but lacked the experience, and some instincts ('*provide food*') appeared to clash with others ('*keep food*'). Pa learned from his first year and did an excellent job provisioning and caring for young.

FSV47 and FSV48 were strong and appeared healthy. Sadly, FSV48 died on May 10 following a severe hailstorm. FSV47 survived and fledged on July 2.

Projects

Golden Eagle Tracking

The Raptor Resource Project began a Golden Eagle research study in January of 2022. We are monitoring wintering Golden Eagles in the Driftless Area to learn more about their movement on their winter and summer range with potential nest locations, seasonal migration patterns and timing, and route fidelity. Research is being conducted under the guidance and permits of RRP's Jeff Worrell, former director of the National Eagle Center, and raptor biologist Brett Mandernack.

In 2023 we trapped four Golden Eagles in the Driftless, three subadult females and one subadult male, and fit them with satellite transmitters to learn more about these mysterious winter visitors! We also fitted a transmitter on a rehabbed adult male bird. As of this writing, we are receiving data from two eagles. Our study is helping to answer questions about where Golden Eagles in the Driftless spend their summers, what they need for migration and wintering habitat, and what wintering behavior looks like. It also makes people, especially in the Driftless area, more aware of their wild neighbors all year long. To view our interactive maps and meet the eagles, follow this link: <https://www.raptorresource.org/learning-tools/goldeneagles/golden-eagle-maps/>.

If you believe you have Golden Eagles wintering on your land and are interested in supporting this project, please contact Amy Ries at amy@raptorresource.org. We also encourage you to report them on E-bird: <https://ebird.org/home>.



Projects

Autumn Banding Stations

The Raptor Resource Project operates two autumn banding stations: one in partnership with Luther College in Decorah, Iowa; and the other in Wisconsin near the Mississippi River. While both do research, the primary focus of the Hawk Hill banding station in Decorah is education.



Hawk Hill

Red-tailed Hawk: 46
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 5
Cooper's Hawk: 1
Broad-winged Hawk: 1
Red-shouldered Hawk: 1

Wyalusing

Red-tailed Hawk: 177
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 50
Cooper's Hawk: 18
Broad-winged Hawk: 5
Merlin: 3

Peregrine Falcon: 1
Golden Eagle: 1

Our interns were wonderful! They were engaged, attentive, and excited to learn all aspects of our banding program. We also saw a lot of visitors this year, including a group from the World Owl conference, students, educators, and homeschool groups from Luther College, Upper Iowa University, Carleton College, Pleasant Valley Homeschool Association, the Decorah and Postville K-12 school systems, 4H, and individual families.

Autumn was long and warm, which meant fewer big days and a long, extended migration. Hawk Hill had a good year, but our Wisconsin station had a banner year and has the potential to become a landmark site, especially given its place on the Mississippi River. More research needs to be done on migration through North America's biggest Central Flyway and we are the people to do it!

I've witnessed an increase from other organizations using sites such as ours as important partners in monitoring population, migration, and health changes in raptors as global climate change increases in frequency and intensity. Programs such as this are as important as ever, if not more. Thank you for supporting our work.

– David Kester, Station Master

Thanks

A heartfelt thanks to our moderators, especially lead Decorah Eagle mods Tulsa and Glogdog; lead Decorah North Mods RRiverEagle and EagleEyeDNN, Flyway chat lead Izzysamlike eagles, and lead Facebook Mod V. Your leadership, dedication, and hard work are a vital part of our success. Our moderators volunteer long hours and are an invaluable source of information and inspiration for millions. Thank you so much for your hard work, knowledge, and experience.

Thanks to our camera operators, Explore.org mods, and the people who capture and post video to YouTube, especially GABear, Camop Spish, Coqui, Dun, Talon, Zandra, TinyEagle, Sandy, and Eaglewind, and videographers EagleCam, Blossom Holland, Tulsaducati, Rosieann B, 70chico1, ginger52, Arlene Beech, Eaglespirit, and Chickiedee64. Your hard work makes sure that no one misses life in and around our nests.

We couldn't follow our eagles without Brett Mandernack! A very special thanks to Brett, Ryan Schmitz, and David and Ann Lynch. We have learned so much we would never have known without you.

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

2023's site surveys began in late February and continued through mid-June. Falcons can shift around quite a bit before they lay eggs and their activity level changes dramatically with full-time incubation, hatch, and the end of full-time brooding. Regular observation is the only way to understand where falcons are nesting and what nest chronology looks like. Thanks to Bill Smith, Jon Stravers, and Mark Blackburn for their helpful, detailed observations, in the case of Bill and Jon, their boats! We couldn't see some of our sites without you.

Industrial sites were crucial to the recovery of the peregrine falcon. We really appreciate the people that help us get it done, including our partners at Xcel Energy, Dairyland Power, Minnesota Power, Great River Energy, Muscatine Power and Water, 3M, Red Wing Grain, Ardent Milling, Bay State Milling, and Viserion America: especially Curtis Dominicak, Jaime Massey, Brian Nelson, Frank Sperlak, Richard Lockwood, Cheryl Eler, Tanner Bakke, John Kaczmarek, Bill Heston, Yolietta Stevens, Lynn Hall, Renata Johnson, Melissa Betzler, Brad Foss, Ben Campbell, Doug Braff, Karen Kiekow, Brenda Geisler, Joe'l Brenny, Jim Larson, Seth Bayer, Dustin Sanborn, Wendy Hoornstra, Jon Frost, James McWard, Robert Freeman, and Scott Dittmer.

Our conservation partners manage much of the wildlife and wildlands where we work, help us get where we need to go, and are always enthusiastic when it comes to Peregrine Falcons, Bald Eagles, and the mighty Mississippi River. We appreciate the dedication and commitment of the Iowa DNR, Dubuque County Conservation Board, Wisconsin DNR, Luther College, River Valley Raptors, Effigy Mounds National Monument, the Brice Prairie Conservation Association, the Mississippi River Valley Conservancy, the Riverland Conservancy, the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, and the Bird Banding Lab: especially Bruce Blair, Karmin Klingenberg, Jessica Salesman, Brian Preston, Elli Lineberg, Sumner Matteson, Dean Edlin & crew, Mark Rasmussen, Gary Wolfe, Justin Nooker, Naomi Rivers, Joe & Abbie Krumrie, Fritz Funk, and Marc Schultz.

And finally, a huge shoutout to our landowner partners: the Truttman, Greshik, Guider, Mulholland, Conrad, Howe, Bixby, Melli, Hjelle, Holthaus, and Noll families; Myrna Buri, Doug Wood, Stephen Grulkowski, Rich King, Dave Noble, Cynthia Kindlien and Lawrence Underkoffler, Vic and Mary Holec, Robert and Carol Mayfield, and Katie Ibsen. Thank you for supporting our work.