

Raptor Resource Project 2012 Annual Banding Report

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2012 Raptor Resource Project Banding Report

What a year! We hit the ground running in 2012 and never really stopped! The Decorah Eaglecam remained incredibly popular, with 75 million more people checking in to watch the eagles raise their family. Our satellite tracking project has proven quite popular, with over 1500 people per week stopping by our website to check in on D1 and the late D14. We added turkey vulture and blue heron cams, improved the Decorah eagle and Great Spirit Bluff peregrine cams, and consulted with Eaglecrest as they expanded from the Eaglecrest *hawk* cam to the Eaglecrest *wildlife* cam. Our nest box program expanded with the addition of two new cliff nest boxes, the replacement of four old nest boxes with new ones built by Boy Scout Jonathan Howe, and the installment of six kestrel nest boxes as part of a pilot kestrel program we have begun in NE Iowa. We banded 66 Peregrine falcons at 20 locations and discovered a new cliff nest just north of Lansing, Iowa, bringing the total number of sites we monitor to over 50.

It was an interesting year on the river cliffs. We have a number of sites where Peregrine falcons are bouncing back and forth between nests in their territories: the Alma stack versus 12-Mile Bluff, Red Wing Grain versus Diamond Bluff, and Castle Rock versus Bay State Milling. We don't know whether the same territorial pair is choosing to nest in different locations, or whether a new falcon is enticing a resident falcon to a different nest on the same territory. We're also seeing Peregrine falcons appearing at smaller bluffs like Aggie's bluff just north of Lansing, Iowa, and the Wyalusing Quarry bluff near Wyalusing State Park in Wisconsin, while large bluffs like Maassen's bluff near Nelson, Wisconsin, sit empty. Early this spring, it appeared that falcons were going to nest at Shellhorn bluff, Leo's bluff, Diamond bluff, and Homer bluff, yet those four sites ended up failing. Are we seeing the emergence of a 'floater' population as the overall Peregrine population stabilizes? Could there be just one resident pair of Peregrines in areas where we think we've seen multiple pairs? How is nest site selection - something we are clearly seeing in a few locations - affecting overall peregrine numbers? For example, if the resident pair in Winona chooses to nest at Bay State Milling and not Castle Rock, does that affect residency at Homer bluff just south of Winona? We also have two territories being defended by non-productive females - another trend to watch for as the population matures.

It was a mixed year for the 2012 juvenile Decorah eagles. D12 was electrocuted on 7/1/12 and D14 was electrocuted on 11/25/12. D12 was near the hatchery but D14 was not - we would not have known about him if it wasn't for his transmitter. We notified the electric companies and provided both of the eagles to game wardens. After D12's death, a group called 'The D12 Memorial Group' established a Facebook page, put together a memorial book, and raised funds to erect power pole perches as part of a joint



Bob Anderson and Chuck Sindelar at Maiden Rock. We banded falcons here on 7/2/12.



Board Member John Dingley and Amy Ries installing kestrel nest boxes.

2012 Raptor Resource Project Banding Report

Banding season is long over, but our work isn't done! Next year we plan to add a Philippine eagle cam to raise awareness of that species' plight, possibly expand our kestrel project, and look at ways to use the data we've collected on D1 and D14 to help conserve land for eagles and other species in Iowa. Conserving the health of Iowa's wild spaces and rivers is of utmost importance to protecting bald eagles and other species. We've also made information about power safe poles and perches available on our website for anyone who is interested in following the lead of the D12 Memorial Group.

We wrote the Raptor Resource Project's 2012 Banding Report to provide formal banding data for collection and study and to share our observations with our members and friends. I would like to thank the many people who helped us this year by humping heavy, awkward gear up bluffs, identifying falcons, tracking hatch dates, emailing pictures and observations, helping with banding, and gifting us with donations. We need more eyes looking for new sites and watching existing ones. You are a crucial part of what we do.

This year, we welcomed back Gary Grunwald, the entire Howe family, Brenda and Dean Geisler, Brett Mandernack, Dot Karlsen, John Dingley, Chuck Sindelar, Pat Schlarbaum, and Dan and Sheila Broughton. New friends included Jess Carstan from the Wisconsin DNR, Carl Oppert, and Aggie, the landowner at the new Aggie's bluff.

Thanks to the technical support staff at Ustream and Simms Electronics in Decorah, especially Ruby Tugade, Joanna Dorfman, and Chris Brey from Ustream, and Kenny from Simms. The popularity of the Decorah eaglecam was a learning experience for everyone, but it was never too late nor too early for Ruby, Chris, and Kenny.

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: Jim Fuchs, Jim Hill, Frank Sperlak, Jim Carlson, Bill Wardell, Ken Weisser, Dan Meyer, Kristi Albrecht, Isaac Fuhr, Ed Bohrer, Doug Braff, Harper Harkins, Tim Splinter, Paul Lassance, Chuck Bremer, Dean Pagel, Jim Larson, and Regina Minary. You guys help us monitor and band falcons at sites throughout Minnesota, Iowa, and Western Wisconsin, and we couldn't do it without you! We are sad to announce the retirement of John Thiel and Dan Orr, who have both been ardent supporters of our work with Peregrine falcons. We welcome Brad Foss and Brian Schmidt, who will be replacing them. Both Brad and Brian have been banding with us for the last couple of years and are, like their mentors, enthusiastic about the falcons.

We would like to recognize the moderators on Ustream chat and Facebook. The Ustream and Facebook mods are a vitally important part of the eaglecam experience. They 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!

Finally, many thanks to our forum members and the people who capture and post video to YouTube. Your postings, comments, and contacts keep us on our toes and help document behavior at our nests. You are very helpful in our efforts to monitor nests and babies, for which we are deeply grateful.

Our climbing team this year was comprised of Bob Anderson, Dave Kester, Amy Ries, Neil Rettig, and Brett Mandernack. We tackled overhangs, poison ivy, 100 degree days, raccoon poop, and the wilds of Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota...and everyone is still looking forward to next year!

2012 Productive Nest Sites

We hope you enjoy reading our report.

5/24/12: Lee's Bluff (P5) | Lynxville, WI | Crawford County

Lat/Long

43.238, -91.064

Adult data

Adult female: b/g 51/E Jackie (2003 hatch from Maiden Rock)

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

1st hatch (estimated): 5/04/12

Female	1907-02726	79/W	Hammy
Female	1907-02727	80/W	Wisdom
Female	1907-02728	81/W	Carsten
Male	1126-14347	64/N	Sindelar

Comments

This was the first spot we banded this year. Dave Kester and Brett Mandernack rappelled down to retrieve the babies and Brett's intern Carl Oppert got Mom's band number. This cliff is recorded as P5 in Dan Berger's notes of the historical nesting population in J. Hickey's book, Peregrine Falcon Populations. Young falcons were confirmed in 1952 and adult falcons present in 1953, 1954, and 1956.

Year falcons first nested here: 2003 | Total chicks fledged from this location (2012): 18

5/25/12: 6/9/10: 3M Facility | Cottage Grove, MN | Washington County

Lat/Long

44.790089,-92.912848

Adult data

Adult female: b/g, unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

1st egg: 3/21/12 | 1st hatch: 4/27/12

F	1907-02729	82/W	Cecelia
M	1126-14348	76/N	Siegel
M	1126-14349	77/N	Jules
M	1126-14350	78/N	Timmie

Comments

3M employee Steve Kolsch joined us for the climb to the top of 3M's 166' water tower, which provides a spectacular view of the surrounding area. The late Rob MacIntyre, Bob, and Amy installed the nest box here in the fall of 2006. Hauling the box up the side of the water tower destroyed a rope, but provided a wonderful home for falcons, which first nested here in 2008. This year, Bob banded four feisty, footy young falcons 25-28 days old, losing some blood in the process.



3M falcon. What a handful!

2012 Productive Nest Sites

Year falcons first nested here: 2008. Total young fledged from this location (2012): 15

5/25/12: Horizon Milling | Lake City, MN | Wabasha County

Lat/Long

44.441678,-92.271382

Adult data

Adult female: b/g, unknown. May be Charlette from last year

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

unknown number of eggs laid | 3 young hatched

Hatch date unknown

F 1907-02730 83/W Roschen

M 1126-14359 79/N Bayamo

M 1126-14360 80/N Nashi

Comments

We started banding underneath the roof here because of Lolo, a very aggressive female falcon and granddaughter of the iconic Mae from the Allen S King plant in Oak Park Heights. She put scratches in a number of helmets over the years! In 2011, Charlette, a 2008 hatch from the Wells Fargo building in Bloomington, Minnesota, replaced Lolo. Charlette is much less aggressive and so we started banding on the roof again. We were not able to ID the adults, who never came close to us.

Year falcons first nested here: 2002 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 38

5/27/12: US Bank Building | La Crosse, WI | La Crosse County

Lat/Long

43.813387,-91.253258

Adult data

Adult female: b/g, unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

unknown number of eggs laid | 2 young hatched

1st egg: 3/25/12 | 1st hatch: 5/2/12

F 1907-02731 84/W Howe

M 1126-14361 81/N Blank

Comments

The nest box here is a little challenging: to get the babies, you have to lean far out over the edge of the building while balancing on a ladder! Bob, Dave, and Amy retrieved the young falcons. Amy sexed and banded them.

Thanks to Jeff Blank for giving us access on a Sunday! On December 11, 2012, Jeff reported seeing the adult female and an immature falcon, most likely one of the young. With the lack of ice and wonderful pigeon supply, the falcons have no reason to leave. Jeff enjoys watching the falcons scaring up pigeons and the adults training their young - something also reported by watchers at other locations.



The falcons can be watched from a monitor in the bank's lobby or the top of La Crosse City Parking Garage next door.

2012 Productive Nest Sites

Year falcons first nested here: 2006 / Total young fledged from this location (2012): 17

5/27/12: P17 (Great Spirit Bluff) | La Crescent, MN | Houston County

Lat/Long

43.871106,-91.320002

Adult data

Adult female: b/g P/87 Michelle (2005 hatch from Maassen's Bluff, WI)

Adult male: b/g 06/N Travis (2003 hatch from Lee's Bluff/P5, WI)

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

1st egg: 3/25/12 | 1st hatch: 5/3/12

F 1907-02732 85/W Maggie

F 1907-02733 86/W Christine

F 1907-02734 87/W Cassie

Comments

Tom and Alice Howe own this bluff. He and his family are great supporters of our work and truly enjoy watching the falcons. They put on a very nice dinner to celebrate the banding. In addition to the regular banding team, we were joined by the Mississippi River Valley Conservancy (George Howe is the conservation director) and several Howe family members and friends. The children especially enjoyed seeing and briefly holding the young falcons, and were very curious about 'their' falcons.

2012 saw a lot happen at Great Spirit Bluff. We added a camera to this site late in 2011, which allowed us to see a great deal of what happened in this box and identify both adults. However, the camera was down when Cassie disappeared from the box on 6/02/12. She was never seen again, so we presume that she died in the fall or shortly thereafter. Maggie developed a bad limp, but recovered and fledged successfully. Christine appeared to fall out of the box when she was roughly 40 days of age, but she survived, delighting cam viewers when she reappeared.



Christine back in the box after fledging.

The adventures of the unhatched egg, named 'Eggbert', was the subject of a book written by John and Susan Howe's daughter Laura. You can read the book here:

<http://www.raptorresource.org/pdf/Eggbert.pdf>

The male falcon, Travis, was named for a young man who committed suicide on Lee's bluff the year that falcons began nesting there.

Year falcons first nested here: 2005 / Total young fledged from this location (2012): 29

2012 Productive Nest Sites

5/29/12: Bay State Milling | Winona, Minnesota | Winona County

Lat/Long

44.053114,-91.630601

Adult data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

5 eggs laid | 5 young hatched

1st hatch: 5/7/12

F	1907-02735	88/W	Darlene
F	1907-02736	89/W	Kim
M	1126-14362	65/N	Tim
M	1126-14363	66/N	Isaac
M	1126-14364	67/N	Wingold

Comments

This site is visible from Castle Rock and falcons nest either here or there. In 2009 and 2010, they nested here. They returned to Castle Rock in 2011, but were back here for 2012. Where will they go next year?

Bay State Milling was one of four sites to get a nest box from Jonathan Howe this year. Jonathan, son of John and Susan Howe, built the boxes for his Eagle Scout service project. They auto-close from the top when opened, which keeps the young falcons from jumping out when we come to band them. Bob, Dave, and Amy banded, accompanied by food safety manager Tim Splinter. We were quite shocked when we opened the box and found five young falcons! It was very windy on the roof, which is flat, so we took them under the roof to band them safely.

89/W (Kim) was found dead on a nearby rooftop on July 18. She was too badly decomposed for us to determine the cause of death. The other four falcons appear to have fledged successfully.

Year falcons first nested here: 2009 | Total chicks fledged from this location (2012): 11

5/30/12: Alliant Energy Nelson Dewey Plant | Cassville, WI | Grant County

Lat/Long

42.722433,-91.008459

Adult data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

1st hatch: 5/8/12

F	1907-02737	90/W	Mathilda
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Recently hatched falcons. Photo by Paul Lassance.

2012 Productive Nest Sites

F 1907-02738 91/W Dorothy
M 1126-14365 82/N Daveboy
M 1126-14366 83/N BillyF

Comments

Amy, Brett Mandernack, Ryan Schmidt, and Paul Lassance took the elevator up to band this year. They banded the young falcons on the stack, toward the elevator. Although we have banded on plenty of catwalks, a solid floor is nice because, unlike catwalk grating, it provides a safe place to put tools and bands. The four young falcons were healthy, well-fed, and footy! Prey items included blue jays and warblers.

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 / Total young fledged from this location (2012): 34

5/30/12: Bunge North America Stackhouse | MacGregor, IA | Allamakee County

Lat/Long

43.023392, -91.173178

Adult data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

unknown number of eggs laid | 3 young hatched

1st hatch: 5/4/12

F 1907-02739 92/W Cy
M 1126-14367 84/N TC
M 1126-14368 85/N Herky

Comments

This nest box can be clearly viewed from an overlook at the top of Point Anne lane just south of the Bunge plant. Early in the spring of 2012, Pat Schlarbaum from the Iowa DNR led groups of students up to watch and discuss the falcons. They were thrilled to see Dad bring in prey!



Carl, Brett, and Dave at the nest box. This box, which tilts up to cover the front, was built by Jonathan Howe as part of his Eagle Scout service project.

We replaced the old box here with one of Jonathan's new boxes, and the banders loved it! Dave Kester, Brett Mandernack, and Carl Oppert, an intern of Brett's, went up the elevator to band. The three young falcons were very healthy.

Year falcons first nested here: 2009 / Total young fledged from this location (2012): 6

5/30/12: Xcel Energy Sherco Plant | Becker, MN | Sherburne County

Lat/Long

45.379101, -93.895947

Adult data

Adult female: b/g 30/B

2012 Productive Nest Sites

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

unknown number of eggs laid | 3 young hatched

1st egg: 3/27/12 | 1st hatch: 5/5/12

F 1687-30542 57/S Avery

M 1126-14243 94/B Justin

Comments

On 5/30/12, reading students from Becker Intermediate School joined Dan Orr, Kristi Albrecht, Brian Schmidt, Isaac Fuhr, Brenda Geisler, and Ed Bohrer for the banding of two eyasses at the Sherco Power Plant. The students, who had been following the progress of the eyasses on the falcon cam while reading books about peregrine falcons, named the falcons.



Dan Orr, Kristi Albrecht, and students. Photo by Brenda Geisler.

Dan Orr is retiring this year. We will miss him. He was a wonderfully enthusiastic supporter of our program from the very beginning.

Year falcons first nested here: 1992 | Total chicks fledged from this location (2012): 54

5/31/12: Red Wing Grain Stack House | Red Wing, MN | Goodhue County

Lat/Long

43.023392,-91.173178

Adult data

Adult female: b/g, believed to be new. Band number unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

1st egg: 04/01/12 | 1st hatch: 05/11/12

F 1907-02953 62/V Marie

F 1907-02954 64/V Buela

F 1907-02955 65/V Christa

M 1126-14369 86/N Chuck

Comments

For the first time in a long time, falcons failed to nest here in 2011. We think they may have been over at Diamond Bluff, across the river. In 2012, falcons returned, while Diamond Bluff remained non-productive. We've seen this at a number of our sites: the Alma stack versus the Alma cliff, the Castle Rock pothole versus the Bay State Milling nest box, and now the Red Wing Grain nest box versus the



Chuck with a falcon at Red Wing Grain.

2012 Productive Nest Sites

Diamond Bluff nest box. We don't know whether the same falcons change sites, or a new falcon entices a resident falcon to a new nest in the same territory.

Amy Ries, Chuck Bremer, and Dean Pagel banded the falcons here. In 2010, the last time we banded here, we thought that Husker, the old resident female, had been replaced. However, the female that year did have a red/black band, like Husker. We were not able to get a band number this year, but the new female does have a black/green band.

It is always nice to see Chuck, who has been a real friend of the falcons for many years. Falcon Buela was grounded at Caribou coffee on 06/18/12. Chuck, Amy Ries, and Isaac Ries returned her to the roof - Isaac's first working visit. He loved it!

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 27

6/01/12: P15 (Lansing Bluff) | Lansing, IA | Allamakee County



Adult female at Lansing Bluff. Photo by Carl Oppert.

Lat/Long

43.334757,-91.164042

Adult data

Adult female: b/g W/23 Centura (2006 hatch from Sartell Paper Mill, MN)

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

1st hatch (estimated): 05/5/12

1907-02956 66/V Kristie

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1907-02957 67/V Angela
1907-02958 68/V Aggie
1126-14370 87/N Oppert

Comments

Bob Anderson, Dave Kester, and Amy Ries went up the cliff. Dave rappelled and Bob and Amy banded. Carl Oppert and Brett Mandernack returned later to get Mom's band number. The falcons nested in the new nest box at the north end of the cliff this year. The young falcons were 25-28 days old.

This is a wonderful site: a nice walk, great views, and a gentle, stable slope that is perfect for a first rappel. The only drawback is poison ivy.

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 | Total young fledged from this location (2011): 27

6/01/12: Xcel Energy Prairie Island Plant | Goodhue County

Lat/Long

44.621907,-92.632648

Adult data

Adult female: b/g, band number unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

Hatch date unknown

F 1687-30543 58/S Shiner
F 1687-30544 59/S Darter
F 1687-30545 60/S Brook
M 1126-14244 95/B Pike

Dan Orr and Brian Schmidt banded here.

Year falcons first nested here: 1997 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 46

6/04/12: Dairyland Power Cooperative | Alma, WI | Buffalo County

Lat/Long

44.307681, -91.910551

Adult data

Adult female: b/g R/36 Alex (2009 hatch from the Xcel Energy Allen S King plant)

Adult male: b/g H/31 Speedy (2009 hatch from Horizon Milling)

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

1st egg: 04/03/12 | 1st hatch: 05/12/12

M 1126-14245 96/B Uncle Bob
M 1126-14130 04/M Big Kahuna
F 1907-02704 63/V Patsy

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F 1907-02705 69/V Malin

2012 Productive Nest Sites

Comments

The falcons here bounce back and forth between the cliff and the stack. They chose the stack this year. The Alma nest box hangs from a sill light port and is a first of a kind designed by Bob Anderson to seal off the front when the box is opened, which prevents young falcons from jumping out.

John Thiel, a long-time friend and supporter of our work with Peregrine falcons, retired this year. We will miss him - like Dan Orr, he was a wonderfully enthusiastic supporter of our project. I hope you enjoy fishing, John! Brad Foss, the new Dairyland Power biologist, helped Amy Ries retrieve the falcons.

Year falcons first nested here: 1997 | Total chicks fledged from this location – plant + bluff (2012): 55

6/04/12: Dairyland Power Cooperative | Genoa, WI | Vernon County

Lat/Long

43.558991, -91.232734

Adult data

Adult female: new, unbanded

Adult male: b/g 40/N Lucas (2004 hatch from Dairyland Alma)

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

1st egg: 04/02/12 | 1st hatch: 05/12/12

M 1126-14131 05/M Shadow

M 1126-14132 06/M Drew

F 1907-02706 57/W Lorilee

Comments

Bob Anderson, Dairyland Power biologist John Thiel, and his protégé Brad Foss banded the young falcons in Dairyland's lunchroom, where they were joined by a number of plant staff. The Genoa falcons nest on the 400' level of a power plant stack, which is reached via elevator.

Year falcons first nested here: 1998 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 46



John Thiel and Bob Anderson banding at Genoa.

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6/08/12: Xcel Energy Blackdog Plant | Eagan, MN | Dakota County

Lat/Long

44.810674, -93.248526

Adult data

Adult female: b/g 30D Mandy Rose
(2004 hatch from the Xcel Monticello plant)

Adult male: b/g unknown

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

1st egg: 4/08/12 | 1st hatch: 5/20/12

M 1126-14133 07/M Dan

M 1126-14134 08/M Parker

F 1907-02959 58/W Lucille

F 1907-02960 59/W Peggy

Comments

Like the King and Lansing sites, Blackdog is part of a monitoring project to determine the health of the peregrine falcon population following delisting. During inspection of the HRSR stack, some dead falcons were found in the natural gas stack immediately adjacent to the coal stack on which the nest box is placed. After trying a number of falcon deterrents, Xcel Energy put a grating over the stack to prevent birds from flying in. We really appreciate the work they have put into making this nest box safe - it was very expensive and labor intensive, and no more dead falcons have been found in the stack since.



Falcon at Blackdog Nestbox



Dan with Dan, one of the young falcons at Blackdog.

This nest box is on the 600' level of the Blackdog stack. It is reached by a combination of elevator and ladders - 300' of ladders! The climb is long and very, very hot. It is a real pleasure to reach the top! This year, Amy and Xcel Employee Dan Meyer found four healthy young babies with nice crops. While mom Mandy Rose hasn't reached the ferocity of, say, Nora, she is definitely getting bolder.

Dan reported that all four young falcons fledged on 6/29/12.

Year falcons first nested here: 1993 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 56

2012 Productive Nest Sites

6/09/12: P10 (West Bluff) | Pepin County, WI

Lat/Long

44.529311, -92.294142

Adult data

Adult female: b/g unknown

Adult male: b/g unknown

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

1st hatch: unknown

F 1907-02707 60/W Olivia

F 1907-02961 70/V HollyP

F 1907-02962 71/V Katia

F 1907-02963 72/V Claire

Comments

West Bluff is another favorite site: the views are gorgeous, the landowners are wonderful, and the eyrie always provides a challenge, regardless of the pothole or ledge the falcons choose. This year, the falcons nested at the south end of bluff in a slightly overhanging eyrie, which failed last year. We were happy to see it succeed this year! Falcons Olivia and HollyP are named after the landowners' grandchildren.



Dave Kester and falcon. Dave is holding the falcon for banding.

Year falcons first nested here: 2005 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 17

6/15/12: Minnesota Power Hibbard Plant | Duluth, MN | St. Louis County

Lat/Long

46.736316, -92.152189

Adult data

Adult female: unknown

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

1st egg: 4/13/12 | 1st hatch: 5/25/12

F 1907-02964 73/V Cydney

F 1907-02965 74/V Izzy

M 1126-14371 88/N Perry

Comments

This is a fun site! The nestbox is roughly 150' over the Duluth harbor, facing the Bong Bridge. Amy Ries, Harper Harker, and Doug Braff went up the stack accompanied by a safety team. Everyone was so enthusiastic, especially Harper. She had never been up a stack before, and her family was on site to watch her make the climb. What an



Doug Braff at the top of the stack.

2012 Productive Nest Sites

experience! The young birds were healthy and well fed, although the nest box was the dirtiest I've ever seen. Judging from the prey remains, the falcons are eating a lot of gulls.

We can't bring a kennel up the stack, so each falcon is taken from the box, banded, and put back in. Harper and Doug were very helpful and handled the young falcons like pros. All of the banders were told what to do in case Mom or Dad attacked, but both falcons kept their distance.

Year falcons first nested here: 2008 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 11

6/25/12: Great River Energy Plant | Elk River, MN | Sherburne County

Lat/Long

45.296588, -93.558118

Adult data

Adult female: unbanded

Adult male: b/g H/23 Sawatzke (2009 hatch from Xcel Energy's Monticello plant)

Nesting data

3 eggs laid | 2 young hatched

1st egg: 4/25/12 | 1st hatch: 6/3/12

1947-18961 A/26 Larissa (named after a very special GRE employee who is fighting breast cancer)

1947-18962 A/27 Scout (after the International Scout II, tough little 4 X 4 trucks)

Comments

Brenda Geisler, a GRE employee who watches this site, reports:

"This year two males showed up at the nest box, the first one 01/M – Blaster – banded in 2010 at the Sherco Power Plant, arrived at the nest box on 3-16-12 with the unbanded female. With Blaster being the younger of the two males, he lost the nest box and the unbanded female to the older male falcon H/34 – Sawatzke.

H/34 Sawatzke was also seen and pictured at the GRE nest box in fall of 2011 with an unbanded female on 9-12-11 thru 9-20-11.

Present at the banding were Brenda's family from Phoenix, GRE employees and some the local Elk River Salk Middle School 7th grade science students, who followed the progress and growth of the falcon family via the GRE bird cam."



Harper Harker and friend.



Amy and Brenda at GRE.

2012 Productive Nest Sites

From 10-11-12:

"The male falcon H/34 – Sawatzke - is still at the nest box with a new banded female. New female 12/U – Beverly – was banded in 2011 at UND Water Tower, Grand Forks Campus, Grand Forks county, ND. She arrived and was photographed on 9-28-12. She remains in the area and the nest box today. Could this be the possible pair for next year? Only time will tell, we will see next year!"

Thanks for watching, Brenda! Your detailed observations are helpful and very interesting!

Year falcons first nested here: 2007 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 19

6/25/12: Xcel Energy King Plant | Oak Park Heights, MN | Washington County

Lat/Long

45.03012,-92.779287

Adult data

Adult female: b/g W/E Belinda

Adult male: b/g W/36 Brent

Nesting data

7 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

1st egg: 4/12/12 | 1st hatch: 6/2/12

M 1126-14372 89/N Tommy

F 1947-18963 A/28 Nora

Comments

The King plant is a special place for us. The utility peregrine program started here in 1988, when Paul Simonet, a falconer and Xcel employee, spotted a falcon and called in the Raptor Resource Project to confirm it. We installed a nest box. In 1989 Mae, a daughter of project-bred and released falcon MF-1, adopted it. She bred at the King plant until Belinda replaced her in 2004. The King plant, which is part of a monitoring project to determine the health of the peregrine falcon population following delisting, has an excellent history of producing young falcons.

An amazing seven eggs were laid at the Xcel Allen S. King plant this year. Four hatched and three did not. Of the four that hatched, two young falcons died. The eggs took an unusually long time to hatch: it was 46 days from the third egg to first hatch, not the normal 33.

Belinda has a history of large clutches. She frequently lays five eggs, but in 2010, she laid six eggs. Hatch was also delayed that year: the eggs began hatching 41 days after the third egg, not 33. This year, watchers speculated that a female other than Belinda originally laid some eggs in the nest, but no one reported any fighting at the King plant and we have no way to prove that. Given Belinda's record of large clutches, it also seems possible that she laid seven eggs and delayed full incubation until egg six or seven.



View from the King plant, facing north.

2012 Productive Nest Sites

During banding, Bob captured the adult female and verified that she was Belinda. We have started trying to catch the extremely aggressive adults prior to banding to protect the banders and the falcons. In this case, Bob went out on to the catwalk alone, captured Belinda when she bound to his arm, and put a falconry hood on her. He then held her while we retrieved and banded her young. After we returned the young, Bob released Belinda. I can't tell you how much nicer it is to get those babies without being beat up by Belinda!

Year falcons first nested here: 1989 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 60

7/02/12: P11 (Maiden Rock Cliff) | Pepin County, WI

Lat/Long

44.50161, -92.28828

Adult data

Adult female: unknown immature

Adult male: unknown

Nesting data

2 eggs laid | 2 young hatched

1st hatch: 6/8/12

M	1126-14373	90/N	Sin
F	1947-18964	A/29	Dealer



Chuck Sindelar at Maiden Rock.

Comments

We initially thought this site failed. A number of watchers visited it and saw no falcons, or only one falcon. But on May 16th, Amy Ries saw both a male and female peregrine. We visited the site on 6/09/12. Dave Kester rappelled down and found one just hatched Peregrine and one egg. We quickly left, returning on 7/2/12 to band two healthy young falcons. We were joined by Jess Carstan (WI DNR), Chuck Sindelar, Dot Karlsen, and Dean and Brenda Geisler. It was wonderful to see our friends again! Dot has been a project friend for many years, Brenda works at GRE and is a very enthusiastic supporter of our program, her husband Dean is a great guy, and it was nice to meet Jess. Chuck Sindelar, a friend of ours, helped launch Wisconsin's bald eagle banding and monitoring efforts in 1973. It is an honor to have him accompany us.

The female here was an immature bird, which may account for the small clutch size and late hatch. It will be interesting to see what happens here in 2013.

Year falcons first nested here: 2001 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 24

Unusual Incidences and Non-Productive Sites

Maassen's Bluff, Buffalo County, WI

Gary Grunwald and Bob Anderson confirmed falcons in late March and early April, but the site was not productive. We think the falcons may have been drifting back and forth between Twin Bluff, the Wabasha Bridge, and Maassen's Bluff. We don't know whether or not they were ever productive.

Twin Bluff, Nelson, Buffalo County, WI

Amy Ries and Bob Anderson confirmed falcons in April and May, but the site was not productive. We think the falcons may have been drifting back and forth between Twin Bluff, the Wabasha Bridge, and Maassen's Bluff. We don't know whether or not they were ever productive.

Diamond Bluff, Diamond Bluff, Pierce County WI

Bob Anderson saw falcons on 3/22/12 and Amy Ries spotted copulation on 5/29/12. However, subsequent trips never revealed babies, food transfers, chupping, or any kind of behavior that might indicate babies.

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

Bob reported seeing an immature male and mature female here on 4/2/12 and Dave Kester watched this bluff very closely. However, the site was not productive.

Shellhorn Bluff, Brownsville, Houston County MN

Bob saw two falcons here on 3/22/12, and one falcon (a male) on May 4th. However, the falcons were not spotted after that and the site was not productive.

P4 (Homer Bluff), Homer, Winona County MN

Falcons were reported here on April 2nd. Bob verified the report on April 7th, but they did not nest here.

Xcel Energy Riverside Plant, Minneapolis, Hennepin County MN

The infertile female returned for yet another year at the plant. She has been here since 2004, so it seems reasonable to assume that she'll be displaced by a younger, hopefully fertile female within the next couple of years.

Xcel Energy Monticello Plant, Monticello, Wright County MN

Camilla, the resident female, is 18 years old. She failed to lay eggs this year.

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

- Castle Rock Cliff, Trempealeau County, WI. We suspect that the falcons chose the nest box at Bay State Milling across the river. No falcons spotted this year.
- Wyalusing Quarry, Grant County, WI. Falcons were spotted here last year, but the site has not yet been productive.
- Pepin Heights Bluff, MN. No falcons spotted this year.
- Indian Head Bluff, Fountain City, WI. No falcons spotted this year.

Unusual Incidences and Non-Productive Sites

- Fountain City nest box, Fountain City, WI. Falcons nested here last year, but the young died and the male falcon vanished. No falcons spotted this year.
- Dead Cow Bluff, Lansing, Iowa. No falcons spotted this year.
- Lock and Dam 9. No falcons spotted this year.

Ospreys, Eagles, Owls, and Kestrels

Xcel Energy King Plant Ospreys | Oak Park Heights, MN

The Ospreys are nesting on the barge unloader at Xcel Energy's King plant, not far from the falcons' stack. This nest has produced 51 young since Bob Anderson installed it on Earth Day of 1993.

Unfortunately, this will be its last year. The barge unloader has to be removed to make way for the new Stillwater Bridge. There is another Osprey pole on King plant grounds. We'll be watching this spring to see if they adopt it.

Year ospreys first nested here: 1993 | Total young fledged from this location (2012): 51

Xcel Energy Fort St. Vrain Plant Bald Eagles | Platteville, CO

The Bald Eagles are nesting in a large cottonwood tree on the grounds of Xcel's Fort St. Vrain plant, near the juncture of the South Platte and St. Vrain rivers.

The eagle laid her first egg on February 16, and the first of three eaglets hatched on March 29. The nest failed when all three eaglets froze to death during a snowstorm on April 11th.

Total number of eggs laid in 2011: 3 | Total young fledged in 2011: 0

Decorah Fish Hatchery Bald Eagles | Decorah, IA

It was a mixed year at the Decorah bald eagle nest. Once again, millions of people enjoyed watching the eagles. The adults laid three eggs again and successfully raised three young. The babies fledged and we captured one - D14, who turned out to be a male - and fitted him with a transmitter. However, D12 (the oldest) was electrocuted on 7/1/12 and D14 was electrocuted on 11/25/12. D12 was near the fish hatchery but D14 was not. In both cases, we reported the deaths immediately and notified the utility companies of the problem pole.

A group called 'The D12 Memorial Group' established a facebook page, put together a lovely memorial group, and raised funds to erect power pole perches as part of a joint project with Alliant Energy, Puget Sound Energy, the Decorah High School, and Decorah Building Supply. You can read more about that here: <http://raptorresource.blogspot.com/2012/11/bird-safe-power-poles.html>

On October 22, we discovered that Mom and Dad were building a new nest, christened 'the Yonder nest' by a few of our mods. It is fairly common for eagles to make alternate nests, and we don't know yet which one they will choose to nest in. You can read more about that here:

<http://raptorresource.blogspot.com/2012/10/the-decorah-eagles-have-surprised-us.html>

The eagle laid her first egg on 2/17/12. The first eaglet hatched on 3/25/12.

Total young fledged in 2011: 3 (14 since 2008)

Xcel Energy Valmont Owls | Valmont, CO

We are very happy to report that the Valmont Owls successfully fledged young this year, despite an early scare with what appeared to be crows in the nest box.

Ospreys, Eagles, Owls, and Kestrels

The owl laid her first egg on 2/13/12. The first baby hatched 3/19/12.

Total young fledged in 2011: 3

Xcel Energy Pawnee Station Kestrels | Brush, CO

Bob Anderson provided a nestbox here in 2005. It was quickly adopted by a pair of kestrels. This year, they laid five eggs, all of which hatched beginning on 5/9/12.

Ken Weisser maintains the kestrel camera and nest box. He has to clean both the box and camera after each nesting season, since the young kestrels squirt hawk chalk in all directions. We really appreciate all of Ken's work caring for this nest box and camera every year.

Total young fledged in 2012: 5