

## 2015 Raptor Resource Banding Report



*Bob Anderson at Great Spirit Bluff*

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By now, everyone reading this annual report is almost certainly aware that Bob Anderson passed away on July 27, 2015. We received many touching tributes, but I wanted to give a special shout-out to Xcel Energy. Bob began working with the company in 1988 and was close friends with people at its power plants around the country. Xcel Energy recognized Bob with a donation and a beautiful memorial plaque for each plant that had a birdcam program. Because the King Plant is where it all started, a bas relief of Bob's image holding one of his peregrine falcons will be displayed in the plant lobby next to Mae's sculpture. The plant also has a memorial bench with a dedication plaque in memory of Bob's accomplishments. We really appreciate Xcel Energy's support and wonderful recognition of Bob's work.



*Bob and Belinda at Xcel's Allen S. King plant. Bob was very proud of the utility-peregrine program and the role it played in peregrine recovery.*

This report is dedicated to our friend Bob, who truly made a difference.

Bob Anderson lived and breathed falconry. From the first bird he trapped – a red-tailed hawk, in 1960 – to the last falcon he owned, he was a passionate advocate for birds of prey, falconry, and falconers. Bob was one of the founding members of the Minnesota Falconer's Association. He instigated and organized the first of many Minnesota Falconers Association game dinners and served the falconry community as the Central Region Director of the North American Falconers Association. Every time he talked about the recovery of the peregrine falcon, he made sure his audience knew that falconers and falconry techniques were an essential part of the species' return. He had so much knowledge and experience to share, although that never got in the way of a good prank or a funny story. Bob was full of great stories and, like all of his family and friends, we will miss his stories and the camaraderie we shared.

Although Bob was best known for the Decorah bald eagles, his work with peregrine falcons was closest to his heart. Bob was the first person in Minnesota to breed Peregrine falcons and hybrids. In 1987 MF-1, a falcon Bob produced for the Minnesota Falconers Association, became the first to survive and breed in central North America after an absence of twenty-five years. How influential was MF-1? According to our database, she currently has 512 descendants in the United States and Canada. Only a handful of peregrine falcons come close to matching her legacy.

One of MF-1's daughters was very special to Bob. In 1990, peregrine falcon Mae took up residency in a nest box Bob had installed at Xcel Energy's Allen S. King plant in Oak Park Heights, MN. Mae launched our utility-peregrine program and Bob often described her as being like a granddaughter. Electric utilities were key to the peregrine's recovery in the Midwestern United States and Bob loved to talk about the unique marriage between industry and conservation that helped bring his beloved duck hawk back from the brink. Over the years he became great friends with many people from Xcel Energy, Dairyland Power, Minnesota Power, Great River Energy, and Alliant Energy. People always responded to Bob's enthusiasm and passion.

In the mid-1990s, Bob began wondering why peregrine falcons weren't crossing over to cliffs. He decided that nest-site imprinting must be playing a role. Never one to sit on his hands, Bob sold his farm in Hugo, MN, and moved down to Bluffton, IA, where he started a program aimed at imprinting birds to cliffs. After a test hack of four birds in 1997 went well, he released eighteen birds at Effigy Mounds National Monument in 1998 and 1999. This involved a 100-

mile or so round trip every day for months, followed by a walk up a muddy track infested by mosquitoes. But the success of the hacks and the delight of seeing peregrines wheeling above the Mississippi made everything worth it.

In 2000, Bob's gamble paid off when one of his falcons adopted Queen's Bluff in SE Minnesota. The same year, falcons also nested on the cliff at Alliant Energy's plant in Lansing, Iowa and at John Latsch State Park north of Winona, Minnesota. To the end of his life, Bob knew that his cliff-released falcons had attracted urban falcons and started the long awaited crossover. Peregrines attract peregrines, and all of his cliff released birds that survived to adulthood returned to nest on cliffs.

Of course, Bob loved to share his birds. He launched his first bird cam, possibly the first internet-based bird cam, in 1998 at Xcel Energy's Allen S. King plant. Viewers could watch Mae and her mate care for their young via photos that were uploaded to a website every minute or two. People loved it and 'Mae's Internest' made Xcel Energy's corporate website the world's busiest for the first quarter of 1998. Bob went on to establish several more birdcams, including the Fort St. Vrain eagle cam, which was built with the help of our late board president Rob MacIntyre. Bob also enjoyed working with Neil Rettig. He, Neil, Rob, and Dave Kester had a blast filming Raptor Force, which can be watched here: <https://youtu.be/4Wk--fJbV1I>

In 2006 and 2007, Bob and Neil filmed a bald eagle nest in Decorah, Iowa, for the movie American Bald Eagle. "Wouldn't it be fun to put this online?" Bob asked when they were done. In 2009, we uploaded still pictures to a website. In 2010, we streamed via Luther College and Xcel Energy. And in 2011, we went to Ustream and the world fell in love with the Decorah Eagles.

Bob was a great friend to people and birds of prey, an enthusiastic climber, a wonderful fly fisherman, a beer connoisseur, an avid reader, a thoughtful and thorough researcher, a great writer, a huge crossword puzzle fan, an exceptional cook, and someone who lived life to the fullest. As many years as I knew him, I didn't know one-tenth of the stories he had or the people he knew and cared about. We miss you, Bob, and we hope we are doing you proud.

Had we been able to get to every site we banded, we would have broken our previous record of 66 falcons in a season. As things stood, we banded 60 falcons at 18 sites. At least 15 young went unbanded and another ten sites failed. Why so many falcons? As watchers might remember, the winter of 2013/2014 was bitterly cold, snowy, and late. We saw eggs freeze and experienced explosive blackfly hatches as streams and rivers swelled with cool water into early summer. The winter of 2014/2015 was much milder, with warmer temperatures, an earlier thaw, and less snow. This benefited our falcons, who are frequently laying and incubating eggs in relatively cold weather. We also saw fewer hippoboscids this year than in either 2014 or 2013.

Following Bob's death, the Raptor Resource Project elected John Howe as its new director. John and Bob had worked together on several projects, including the falcon cam installation and HD upgrades at Great Spirit Bluff, the Decorah cams, a bald eagle cam project with the Seneca Nation of Indians, and preparation for the Philippine Eagle jungle camera. Bob was impressed by John's leadership and technical skills, his passion for using media to fascinate and motivate people, and his dedication to our mission. Along with our board and several enthusiastic volunteers, John carried out Bob's plans to build a new 'starter nest' (N2B) to replace N2, upgrade the Decorah cams to high definition, add a new Decorah nest to watch, and move forward on the Philippine Eagle project. We plan to continue banding falcons, monitoring sites, sharing our birds, providing online education via chat and facebook, and exploring other ways to help birds of prey. We thank all of our landowners, volunteers, supporters, and fans for standing with us in a very difficult year. As Bob would have said, "You rock!"

*Our board president is Randy Christman. Members are John Dingley, Ken Mueller, Brett Mandernack, Jim Robison, Neil Rettig, Laura Johnson, Dave Kester, and David Lynch. We also want to recognize Dairyland Power and Great River Energy for their donations and outreach in the wake of Bob's loss. Thank you so much for your support.*



## Productive Sites

### 05/27/15: US Bank, LaCrosse WI

#### Adult data

Adult Male: C/80 b/g Burt, a 2005 hatch from Castle Rock, about 28 miles north of US Bank.

Adult Female: unknown

#### Hatch data

Four eggs laid, four eggs hatched

Hatch began: 05/06/15

- |              |      |        |         |
|--------------|------|--------|---------|
| • 1947-20005 | A/46 | Female | Pippa   |
| • 1947-20006 | A/47 | Female | Lofty   |
| • 1947-20007 | A/48 | Female | Brecken |
| • 1156-14918 | 00/D | Male   | Braxton |

The falcons at US Bank can be watched from the sidewalk, the municipal garage, or a monitor inside the bank's lobby, and falcon fans turned out in force to watch the banding! Three enthusiastic children caught Bob's eye. We were on a tight schedule, but he took the time to take them under his wing, introduce them to the eyasses, and let them pick the names. What a wonderful way to start the banding season! A big thanks to building supervisor Jeff Blank for keeping us on top of this site and letting everyone know about the banding. Video here:

<http://bit.ly/1ltgCQ3>

We need to replace the lid and/or box here after next season.

*Year falcons first nested: 2006 | Total number of young produced (2015): 24*



*Bob sharing eyass falcons with three young fans*

## 05/27/15: Ardent Milling, Lake City MN

### Adult data

Adult Female: \*Y/\*P Charlette, a 2008 hatch from Wells Fargo Bank in Bloomington MN.

Adult Male: K/U Gretch, a 2000 hatch from Dairyland Power Genoa in Genoa, WI.

### Hatch data

Unknown number of eggs laid, three eggs hatched

Hatch began: estimated 5/07/15

- 1947-20012 A/53 Female Hiawatha
- 1156-14920 05/D Male Minnesota Mike
- 1156-14921 06/D Male Ardy

It is always great to see the crew at Ardent. While the mill has changed names over the years, their support for the falcons has never wavered! Jim Fuchs took us up top where we banded three eyasses in lovely sunshine. Falcons provide wonderful organic pigeon control and, as the bulging crop at right attests, Gretch and Charlette are keeping their young full!

Male Gretch can trace his ancestry back to a bird Bob produced *and* released at Consumers Power in Michigan in 1995. Female Charlette can trace her lineage back to MF-1, a Bob-produced falcon that became the first to return and breed mid-continent following the species extirpation. Leonardo, a young male from last year's clutch, was spotted in Costa Rica last winter – a distance of over 2000 miles from his home nest!

*Falcons first nested: 2002 | Total number of young produced (2015): 47*



*Two eyass falcons at Ardent Milling. Look at that crop!*

## 05/27/15: Bay State Milling, Winona MN

### Adult data

Adults unknown

### Hatch data

Five eggs laid, five eggs hatched

Hatch began: 05/07/15

- 1947-20008 A/49 Female Freya
- 1947-20009 A/50 Female Susan
- 1947-20010 A/51 Female Aura
- 1947-20011 A/52 Female Zoe
- 1156-14919 04/D Male Jamison

Five is an unusually large clutch size but all of the falcons were very healthy, with nice crops and active feet! We roped off, walked over to the box, put the falcons in two large buckets, and brought them back to a safer spot to



*Falcon Freya learning to fly. Photo credit Jamison.*

band. I would love to know who the adults are, but neither of them tend to come close enough for ID, at least with binoculars. Do falcons who lay five eggs produce young that lay five eggs? We'll have to spend some time here with a spotting scope next year assuming the same female comes back.

There was some discussion about removing the box due to safety concerns, but Bay State Milling has decided to keep it. To read more about how the box was originally installed, follow this link:

<http://www.winonapost.com/archive/030701/2news030701.html>

*Year falcons first nested here: 2009 | Total number of young produced (2015): 20*

## **5/28/15: Alliant Nelson-Dewey, Cassville WI**

### **Adult data**

Adult Female: Milly R/89, a 2009 hatch from Horizon Milling in Lake City, MN.

Adult Male: Unknown

### **Nesting data**

Four eggs laid, three eggs hatched

Hatch began: 05/07/15

- 1947-20013    A/54    Female           Courtney
- 1947-20014    A/55    Female           Abigail
- 1947-20015    B/22    Female           Flash

Paul Lassance took us up the elevator, where we banded three healthy young eyass falcons. I always enjoy the view here and we find an interesting variety of bird remains in the nest box – woodpeckers, flickers, meadowlarks, pigeons, grosbeaks, and more! This stretch of the river provides a diverse diet for the falcons who nest here.

This site is special for more than just the prey remains. Mother Milly came from Ardent Milling in Lake City, MN, about 134 miles northwest. Milly's mother was Lolo. Lolo's father was Smoke, who grew up on cam at Xcel Energy's Allen S. King plant in 1998. Smoke's mother was falcon Mae, the first falcon to nest on a smokestack, and Mae's mother was MF-1, produced by Bob for the Minnesota Falconers Association, who in 1987 became the first falcon to breed in the wild mid-continent since the early 1960s. What a lineage and what a site! This plant has been a great friend to our falcons and we thank them for it.

*Falcons first nested: 2001 | Total number of young produced (2015): 45*

## 05/28/15: Glen Haven Cliff, Glen Haven WI

### Adult data

Adults unknown

### Hatch data

Unknown number of eggs laid, two eggs hatched

Hatch began (estimated): 05/13/15

- 1947-20016 C/80 Female Artemis
- 1947-20017 C/81 Female Diana

We received an email this spring from landowner Crystal Fauster, who told us she thought she had falcons. This site isn't too far from Eagle Valley, so Brett Mandernack's crew were able to help us find the eyrie via a boat on the river. What a fantastically beautiful location, and what an amazing job the landowners have done to preserve and improve the blufftop! I am always inspired by the care and dedication that so many of the people we work with give to their land.

The cliff was a fun challenge. The falcons were nesting deep in a cleft that had to be crawled back into. Once you got there, you had to figure out how to load the eyass falcons into the kennel safely. Then you had to swing back out into daylight with the kennel and accompany it past a big overhang and a terrace to Brett, who got it to Bob, who took it upstairs and banded the falcons with Brett, Ryan Schmitz, Justin Thiele, and Crystal. A thousand thanks to Crystal, Brett, Ryan, and Justin for theirs. The first time we banded here was Bob's last time on rope. It was a beautiful place and an afternoon I will never forget.

*Falcons first nested: 2015 | Total number of young produced (2015): 2*



*The falcons were a little younger than we normally band, but Bob was still able to sex them.*



*Bob heading down to the terrace.*



## 05/30/15: P-17 (Great Spirit Bluff), Dresbach MN

### Adult data

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

Adult Male: 06/N Travis, a 2003 hatch from Lee's Bluff near Lynxville, WI.

### Hatch data

Five eggs laid, four eggs hatched

Hatch began: 05/07/15

- 1156-14922 07/D Male Rusty
- 1156-14923 08/D Male Garrett
- 1947-20018 D/44 Female Elizabeth
- 1947-20019 D/45 Female Nina

As fans will remember, we saw eyass falcons chased out of the nest box by black flies in 2013 and 2014. Black flies lay their eggs in running water and the extremely wet, late springs of 2013 and 2014 resulted in an explosive hatch at exactly the wrong time. 2015 was considerably drier, which kept the flies in check. Instead of banding between showers, we enjoyed lovely warm weather and the company of David Hecht, a former (awesome) intern who came along to help us band. As we've done before, we took the eyass falcons up to the top of the bluff and introduced them to the Howe family and friends before enjoying a wonderful meal. Bob always enjoyed banding at Great Spirit Bluff.

*Falcons first nested: 2005 | Total number of young produced (2015): 35*



*John Howe at Great Spirit Bluff*



*Bob at Great Spirit Bluff*

## 6/01/15: Xcel Energy Blackdog, Burnsville MN

### Adult data

Adult Female: 16/U Frannie, a 2011 hatch from the Stearns County Correctional Facility in St. Cloud, MN

Adult Male: H/38 Cooper, a 2010 hatch from the Colonnade Building in Golden Valley, MN

### Hatch data

Four eggs laid, three eggs hatched

Hatch began: 05/12/15

- 1947-20049 D/46 Female Crystal
- 1156-14924 09/D Male Riley
- 1156-14925 E/87 Male Bloody Dan

Blackdog is one of my very favorite Xcel Energy sites. They have been wonderful friends to our falcons, including putting a grate over an unused stack that falcons were getting trapped in several years ago. It might not sound like much, but it involved a large custom-made grate and several welders in a man-lift a few hundred feet in the air. Blackdog is also one of a handful of plants that have hit 60+ peregrines. What a commitment to recovery!

Every year, I look forward to meeting Dan Meyer, taking the elevator up three hundred feet, and climbing another three hundred feet on ladders to the falcons' nestbox in the sky.

This was one of the first sites that Bob let me band at by myself (after training and approval, of course), and it still gives me a thrill to look down and see the river far below. However, Frannie doesn't approve of our intrusions and let Dan know it! Despite her defense (see E/87's name), we managed to get all three eyasses banded and returned safely. Since we had a problem with hippoboscids last year, we checked the young over to see if we had a problem. I squished a few (yuck!), but the infestation was nowhere near last year's levels.

*Falcons first nested: 1993 | Total number of young produced (2015): 63*



*Frannie defending the nest box, or the last thing prey might see*

## 6/02/15: Xcel Energy Monticello, Monticello MN

### Adult data

Adults unknown

### Hatch data

Four eggs laid, four eggs hatched, one young found dead in box, three survivors

Hatch began (estimated): 05/13/15

- 1947-20050 D/47 Female Abbie
- 1947-20051 D/48 Female Sami
- 1156-14926 E/36 Male Marv

This was my first year at Monticello – an outside ladder climb, which is always fun! A huge thanks to Xcel Energy for taking the time to support our banding research, since access to a place like the Monticello off-gas stack requires a lot of time and effort.

We banded three healthy young. The box was built by Rob MacIntyre and at-risk high school kids enrolled in a shop program. It needs to be replaced – I was told it was over 20 years old and it is in pretty bad shape – but we will try to do so in a manner that honors his commitment to and involvement with youth.

*Year falcons first nested here: 1995 | Total number of falcons produced here (2015): 55*

## **06/02/15: Dairyland Power Genoa, Genoa WI**

### **Adult data**

Adult Female: 83/W Roschen, a 2012 hatch from Horizon Milling in Lake City, MN

Adult Male: 40/N Lucas, a 2004 hatch from Dairyland Power Alma in Alma, WI

### **Hatch data**

Four eggs laid, four eggs hatched

Hatch began (estimated): 05/13/15

- 1947-30411 20/P Female CC
- 1947-30412 21/P Female Halkel
- 1156-23701 54/B Male Dave
- 1156-23702 55/B Male Ben

Bob banded at Dairyland Genoa this year. He told me that he really appreciated Brad Foss and the crew having the falcons ready for him, that he had fun, and that the falcons looked great.

Female Roschen can trace her pedigree back through MF-1. As mentioned previously, MF-1 was the first bird to return to the wild and breed mid-continent following the species' extirpation in the early to mid-1960s. Lucas's father fledged from Castle Rock in 2002 – the first year that site was active. Unfortunately, we don't have a band number for either of his parents, so the pedigree stops there.

*Falcons first nested: 1998 | Total number of young produced (2015): 54*

## 06/03/15: Great River Energy, Elk River MN

### Adult data

Adult Female: b/r 11/X Mary Ellen, a 2012 hatch from Queen's Bluff in Great River Bluffs SP, MN

Adult Male: b/r 65/M Brooklyn, a 2012 hatch from Colonnade Building, Golden Valley MN

### Nesting data

5 eggs laid, 4 young hatched, 4 young fledged

1st egg laid: 4-1-15 | Hatch began: 5/13/15

First egg hatched: 5-13-15, two more hatched on 5-14-15 and the fourth on 5-16-15

Sky was the first falcon to fledge, 6-18-15

- 1947-20052 D/49 Female Sky
- 1947-20053 D/50 Female Lettie
- 1947-20054 D/51 Female River
- 1156-14927 E/34 Male Landyn

Thanks to GRE employee and falcon watcher Brenda Geisler for her excellent, detailed information! Brenda writes: "On 3-8-15, female falcon Mary Ellen 11/X returned for her third year. On 3-17-15, a male falcon named Brooklyn 65/M arrived at the GRE nestbox and courting took place. On 3-27-15, Sawatzke H/34, the male falcon that nested at this nestbox site for the 2012, 2013 and 2014 seasons, returned late (and unexpected) to the nest box. Mary Ellen considered him an intruder and immediately attacked and pinned him in the nest box for a terrible two hour battle. Fortunately Sawatzke escaped with his life and was later located in a nest platform under the 610 Bridge between Coon Rapids and Brooklyn Park.

On 6-3-15, Amy Ries came and banded the four eyasses. We were also joined by Dan Orr, a retired biologist from Xcel Energy, while some of the Great River Energy employees and their families watched. All of the eyasses were healthy." Unfortunately, falcon Sky was struck by a car and killed not long after fledge.

*Falcons first nested: 2007 | Total number of young produced (2015): 28*



*Four eyasses at GRE. Photo credit Brenda Geisler*



## 06/05/15: Red Wing Grain, Red Wing MN

### Adult data

Adult Female: Laura

Adult Male: unknown

### Hatch data

Four eggs laid, four eggs hatched

Hatch began: 05/13/15

- 1156-14928 E/35 Male Casey
- 1156-14929 E/37 Male Mufasa
- 1947-20055 D/52 Female Madison
- 1947-20056 D/53 Female Tootsie

I love Red Wing Grain. Look downstream and you see Barn Bluff. Look upstream, and you barely see the cooling towers of Prairie Island, where falcons are nesting, and Diamond Bluff, where falcons are also nesting. Red Wing Grain was a very early site in the heart of (returned) falcon country. This year, Bob asked me to give his talk to Twin Bluff Middle School about the Project's work returning the peregrine falcon. It was wonderful to introduce the kids to our work and they loved seeing the falcons online. Thanks so much to Red Wing Grain for supporting our work (Jim Larson, Chuck Bremer, Pauline Biederman, and so many more) over the years!

As at a couple of other sites, we had hippoboscids last year. We checked the young falcons and found a few squishable flat flies, but nowhere near the numbers of last year. Congrats to Red Wing Grain for hitting 40 falcons!

*Falcons first nested: 2000 | Total number of young produced (2015): 40*

## 06/06/15: P-4 (Homer Bluff), Homer MN

### Adult data

Adults unknown

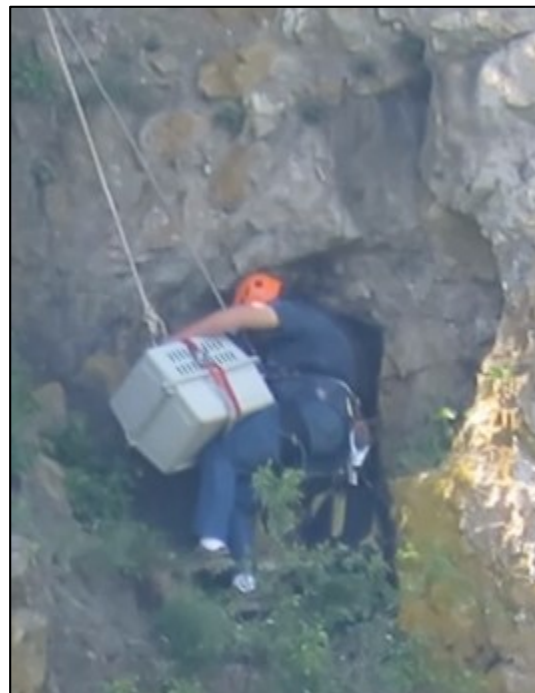
### Hatch data

Unknown number of eggs laid, four eggs hatched

Hatch began: estimated 05/13/15

- 1947-30413 22/P Female Winona
- 1947-30414 23/P Female Esther
- 1947-30415 24/P Female Larue
- 1156-23703 44/B Male Peter

Last year, the falcons chose a new hole on the upstream side of Homer bluff – a large bluff that juts like a prow just south of Winona, MN. This year, they were back in their traditional spot...a large pothole on the downstream side of the bluff. Homer was a historical eyrie prior to the species' extirpation in the early to mid-1960s. In 1952, Dan Berger banded young at this site. In 2007 – 55 years later! – Bob brought Dan back to band. We continued in their proud tradition this year.



*Amy gathers the eyasses at Homer Bluff*

Thanks to landowners Peter and Kay Walsh for being excellent falcon friends. Peter took this video of banding last year and I just found it this morning: <https://youtu.be/9NmJSeVLIS8>. He also posted video of Amy on Homer Bluff taken this year, which can be found here: <https://youtu.be/o0bGKHxDig4>. The footage was collected for Tim Jacobsen and George Howes 'Mysteries of the Driftless', an hour-long follow-up to their Emmy-award winning ½ hour documentary. The Emmy-award winning ½-hour version can be found here: [https://youtu.be/xn\\_DOPumFkU](https://youtu.be/xn_DOPumFkU).

*Falcons first nested: 2007 | Total number of young produced (2015): 13*

## **06/09/15: Maassen's Bluff, Nelson WI**

### **Adult data**

Adults unknown, although this might be the same female we faced last year based on her aggressive behavior.

### **Hatch data**

Unknown number of eggs laid, two hatched

Hatch began: estimated 05/19/15

- 1947-30416    25/P    Female    Roberta
- 1947-30417    26/P    Female    Julie

It is always great to see Gary Grunwald, the falcon watcher at Maassen's Bluff! It's a long way to the bluff, but he knows where they are every year and can usually find them – teeny spots at the distance we are talking! – perched on a favorite tree or ledge. In addition to Gary, we were joined by his friend Julie and WI DNR interns Jared Schamaun and Tristan Christopher. Dave Kester descended to the eyrie while Amy Ries topped and Bob and Gary guided us in from below the bluff. Female falcon "Mrs. Mamba" as Gary named her, was in fine, aggressive form, but Dave got the young falcons loaded into the kennel and we hauled them up top for banding.

*Falcons first nested: 2001 | Total number of young produced (2015): 19*

## **06/09/15: Dairyland Power 12-Mile Bluff, Alma WI**

### **Adult data**

Adults unknown, but changed nesting location from the power plant they nested on two years running.

### **Hatch data**

Unknown number of eggs laid, four hatched

Hatch began: estimated 05/19/15

- 1947-30418    27/P    Female    Catfish
- 1947-30419    28/P    Female    Frankie
- 1947-30420    29/P    Female    ET
- 1156-23704    45/B    Male    Cody

The falcons have nested at three different spots on 12-Mile bluff. This year they chose an old nest box wedged into a large pothole – more of a cave, really – on the south side of the bluff. The box, which was easily large enough to accommodate a human – was built and placed by Dr. Pat Redig from the Raptor Center and a team of climbers. I have no idea how they got it into place, but it is well protected from weather and sunlight, and was in great shape. Dave Kester, David Hecht, and Amy Ries rappelled down to the box and banded the young falcons on the cliff. It was a very enjoyable site and I would love to see them nest here again! Thanks a bunch to

Dairyland Power employees Brad Foss, Ben Campbell, and Cody Henderson. Brad made sure everything was ready, while Ben and Cody squirmed us up the bluff in a Dairyland Power truck and made sure the path out to the bluff was marked, saving us a lot of time and work. You guys are great falcon friends and we really appreciate your hard work!

*Falcons first nested: 1997 | Total number of young produced (2015): 67*



*David Hecht holds a falcon for banding*



*Dave Kester at the box*



*Dairyland Alma from the cliff*



*The nest box from above*



## 06/12/15: Xcel Energy Allen S. King Plant, Oak Park Heights, MN

### Adult data

Adult Female: 69/W Kris.

### Hatch data

Four eggs laid, four eggs hatched

Hatch began: 05/24/15

- 1947-30421 30/P Female Reba
- 1947-30422 31/P Female Breezy
- 1156-23705 47/B Male Ripper
- 1156-23706 46/B Male Billy

It felt odd to band here without Bob, since this site was truly his pride and joy. The Allen S. King plant became the first power plant to house nesting peregrine falcons back in 1990 and Mae, the first falcon here, was a daughter of MF-1, who Bob produced for the Minnesota Falconers Association. He sometimes referred to her as his 'granddaughter'.

Even though Bob couldn't be there, he wanted to make sure the King plant was taken care of. It was the first time the nest had been productive in two years, and the site was on its third falcon – Mae, Belinda, and now Kris. We were joined by Becky Danberg and Bill Wardell, two Xcel Energy employees who have been wonderful supporters of our falcon program over the years! Amy, John Howe, and Bill Wardell went up the stack to retrieve the young falcons, and John, Bill, and Becky Danberg put them back. Dave Kester banded in a small room beneath the stack and banding went off without a hitch. Bob was happy the team pulled it off and thrilled that the King plant broke 60 birds this year!

*Year falcons first nested here: 1989 | Total young fledged from this location (2015): 64*



*Bill and Becky at the 400 foot level*



*Two eyass falcons waiting for their jewelry*



## 06/18/15: Xcel Energy Riverside Plant, Minneapolis MN

### Adult data

Adult Female: unbanded

Adult male: unknown

### Hatch data

Four eggs laid, three eggs hatched

Hatch began (estimated): 06/01/15

- |              |      |        |        |
|--------------|------|--------|--------|
| • 1947-30423 | 32/P | Female | Tina   |
| • 1947-30424 | 33/P | Female | Cheryl |
| • 1156-23707 | 48/B | Male   | JP     |

Finally! An unbanded female defeated resident sterile female Mabel to make the site productive. While Riverside has a blue heron colony, kestrels, screech owls, and a family of fox, peregrines hadn't successfully nested here since 2003 – an absence of twelve years! Bob retrieved the young falcons from a box on top of one of the turbine buildings, accompanied by Cheryl Erler, Amy Ries, JP Harris, Troy Gutzwiller, Dallas Wilm, Eric Mullen, Leigh Broberg, Jeff Faust, Tony Orr, and Tom Stachowski. It was great to have this box productive again!

*Year falcons first nested here: 1998 | Total young fledged from this location (2015): 18*



*Bob gets eyass falcons for the first time in 12 years @ Riverside*

## 06/18/15: Diamond Bluff, Diamond Bluff WI

### Adult data

Adults unknown

### Hatch data

Number of eggs laid: unknown

Hatch began: 05/26/15

- |              |      |        |       |
|--------------|------|--------|-------|
| • 1947-30425 | 34/P | Female | Allis |
|--------------|------|--------|-------|

Bob, Rob Macintyre, and several friends installed a nest box here over 20 years ago. It sat empty until 2011, when falcons finally adopted it. They failed to nest in 2012 and chose a pothole instead of the box when they returned in 2013! They have nested or attempted to nest in the pothole every year since. Bob and Amy were joined by retired Xcel Energy biologist Ken Mueller with his big truck! Amy rappelled off the bumper and went down the wall to band. The first time we checked this site, there were three young falcons that were too young to band, so it was very odd to see a singleton on our return. She was very large, however, with a nice full crop! As for the parents, usually adult females are more aggressive, so Amy was surprised to be attacked by the male. He not only knocked her helmet, he flew at high speed with his wingtips just centimeters from the wall. It was an amazing sight to see! When we left, we ran into one of the family of farmers who owns the land and stopped to talk. Ken Mueller amazed all of us with a demonstration of his fishing prowess, catching a trout in less than five minutes from a small stream. The lone falcon was named 'Allis' after landowner Wally's favorite brand of tractor. What a great day!

*Year falcons first nested here: 2011 | Total number of falcons produced here (2015): 5*

## 06/22/15: Xcel Energy Bayfront Plant, Ashland WI

### Adult data

Adults unknown

### Hatch data

Number of eggs laid: unknown. Number hatched: three

Hatch began: 06/01/15

- 1947-30426 35/P Female Autumn
- 1947-30427 36/P Female Christina
- 1947-30428 37/P Female Caitlin

Although we didn't know it, the first time Bob banded at this plant would be his last time banding. Bob and John Dingley drove up to Ashland, where they were joined by Xcel Energy employees Lynn Hall and Dale Micheletti. The four of them banded three lovely young birds produced in a nest box that Bob built overlooking Ashland's harbor. Although the plant has had a nest box for a while, this marks the second year it has been productive, and the first year falcons have nested in the box. John Dingley told me that Bob had a wonderful time, and John was very honored to have accompanied Bob on Bob's last banding trip.

*Year falcons first nested here: 2014 | Total number of falcons produced here (2015): 6*



*Dale and Lynn with two eyass falcons*

The following sites were productive, but falcons weren't banded. We have included a count where we have one.

### **Minnesota Power and Light Clay Boswell, Cohasset, MN**

Four eyasses were produced at Clay Boswell this year, but we were unable to band them. This site has produced 68 falcons since 1993 (2015).

### **West Bluff, Maiden Rock, MN**

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

### **Aggie's Bluff, Lansing IA**

Bob spotted three eyasses here, but this eyrie is very difficult to reach and we were unable to band them. Bob said of this eyrie "I was disappointed at first, but then I realized that completely independent falcons had always been my goal." He was very proud of this site, which he discovered, and loved to watch for peregrines on the cliff.

### **Bunge North America, McGregor IA**

We found four eyasses here, but all of them were too old to band. Based on what we could see from the ground, we guessed them at 36-38 days old. This site has produced 15 young since 2010.

### **Shellhorn, Brownsville MN**

The landowners reported that falcons were on site and Amy witnessed the adults going in and out of the eyrie. However, we were unable to band here and the production count is unknown.

### **Xcel Energy, Prairie Island, Minnesota**

We were unable to get into Prairie Island to band this year, but it appears that the falcons used the old nest box on the lip of the dome again. Four young were produced at Prairie Island this year, bringing their total to 57 since 1997 (2015). The plant removed the old nest box in October. Frank Sperlak reports *"The old box was in very bad shape. There was barely any top left on it and the sides were very thin. This box had an access door at the back that was nailed shut. The rear access door was gone and that is how they were accessing the box.*

*We removed the entire box and framework. About 100 lbs of smelly old peagravel and related "stuff". The new box was still in great shape and we are looking forward to the parents using this box from now on!"*

### **Twin Bluff, Nelson WI**

We arrived to band during the same time period we banded last year, but the eyasses were too old. Twin Bluff produced four young this year and has produced seven young since 2014, the first year it came online.

## **Unproductive Sites**

### **Xcel Energy Sherco, Becker MN**

Four eggs were laid here and the female incubated them, but none of them hatched. We are not sure what happened but will be watching this site closely next year.

### **3M Watertower, Cottage Grove, MN**

Two eggs were laid here and both young hatched in mid-May, but they disappeared from the nest box shortly afterwards.

### **Fountain City Bluff, Fountain City WI**

Dave Kester found two addled eggs last year, and Amy Ries found three addled eggs this year. Although we heard the male chipping as though he were courting, we could not see a female. No further activity was reported this year.

### **Alliant Lansing Power Plant Cliff, Lansing, IA**

Checked both nest boxes here and saw no signs of eggs or adults. It did look like there could have been a nesting attempt, or at least a scrape, on a horizontal ledge that bisects the cliff. Unfortunately, this ledge is accessible to raccoon as testified by their scat and footprints. No further activity was reported this year.

### **P-11 (Maiden Rock), Maiden Rock, WI**

Adults were spotted here sporadically this year. We checked three separate potholes, including one that an adult flew out of. We found no young, eggs, or signs of nesting.

### **Lynxville Complex, Lynxville, WI**

Bob spent literally hours in Lynxville watching three cliffs, but was unable to spot any falcons. He was quite surprised – while this site isn't always productive, we almost always spot falcons at one of three cliffs in the area.

### **Wyalusing Quarry, Wyalusing, WI**

Brett and Jason reported falcons at the new box built for us by the Wisconsin Falconers Association, but the site was unproductive. This site has now attracted an immature and adult falcon for five years running.

### **South Cliff, Waukon Junction IA**

Dave Kester rappelled down to the eyrie, where he found what he described as a 'crime scene'. An adult female falcon (Amy from Castle Rock) was seemingly stashed at the back of the eyrie, with her head torn off. No young



were found. Joyce Caley and neighbor Tina reported hearing falcons later that year, and there may have been a nesting attempt, but we were unable to verify it.

### **Rob's Nestbox, Greysolon Plaza, Duluth MN**

For the first time since 2006, falcons failed to nest here. Resident female 'Canada' moved to the Torrey building.

### **Minnesota Power and Light Hibbard Plant, Duluth MN**

We had to take the nest box down last fall for mandated stack work. Falcons showed up in the spring and attempted to nest, but failed. We worked with Minnesota Power and Light to get the box back up this fall, and were pleasantly surprised to find a resident falcon on site. We are looking forward to next spring! With this box up, will falcons settle here and on Greysolon, or will Canada stay at Torrey? We can't know for sure, but it is possible that the absent nestbox caused a little territorial fighting that shifted Canada from Greysolon to the Torrey building, which is a little closer to Hibbard and Duluth's waterfront.



*Doug Braff on Hibbard. It was a great day to replace the nest box!*



## Decorah Eagles

The Decorah eagles had a wonderful year, especially when compared to last year's hardships. Eggs were laid on 2/18/15 @ 6:07pm, 2/21/15 @ 7:01pm, and 2/25/15 @ 6:57pm. Hatch occurred on 3/27/15 @ 6:52pm (37 days), 3/29/15 @ 8:16am (36 days), and 4/2/15 @ 9:43am (36 days). D21, D22, and D23 all fledged successfully and were frequently seen flying and hunting around the hatchery before dispersing, probably in August based on sightings.

N2 was destroyed in a storm the morning of Saturday, July 18<sup>th</sup>. Neil Rettig suggested building a new nest with the help of climber Kike Arnal. Bob was extremely excited about the plan and had planned on gathering a bunch of us together to talk it over the week he passed away. We forged ahead with N2B (for Bob), building the nest over roughly a three-day period in August. We returned to mount cameras in September and the eagles were first spotted on the new nest on October 7<sup>th</sup>. They have been enthusiastically building it ever since.



*D23 hatching. Bob was extremely proud of this footage. The hatch can be viewed here: [https://youtu.be/fJN\\_ijngVjo](https://youtu.be/fJN_ijngVjo)*

## Eagle Valley

We worked with Brett Mandernack, the Kohler Foundation, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to install an eagle cam at a nest on an island in the Mississippi river, at Eagle Valley. Unfortunately, the eagles failed to nest there this year, although Brett does not believe they nested anywhere else. While the site is having camera trouble now, adult, sub-adult, and juvenile eagles were all spotted in and around the nest tree this fall. Brett and his crew are working to get the camera restored.



## Fort St. Vrain

Bob and Rob installed the first camera here in 2003, so we've been watching this nest longer than the Decorah Eagles and many of our falcons. The eagles at Fort St. Vrain are more similar in behavior to the eagles in Decorah than the eagles at Eagle Valley. Both adults worked on the nest. The male brought in food while the female incubated and both parents hunted and fed young. A variety of food was brought in on a fairly regular basis, food was stored in the nest, and one of the parents was usually present while the eaglets were young. Despite the excellent care provided by both parents, only one eaglet survived to fledge. We don't know why two died although, given their age, hypothermia could have played a role. Colorado's Front Range is susceptible to heavy, wet, late-winter snow.

On a recent trip to Colorado, Bill H., the plant contact for the Fort St. Vrain eagles, took us to visit the nest. I've included a photo from that trip to show everyone how large it is. He also pointed out that a nearby colony of prairie dogs which were moved or drowned out by flooding had returned. An eagle gave us proof of that by showing up with a prairie dog in its talons! This seems like a very good sign for next year's nesting season. Fort St. Vrainers will be happy to know we are looking at upgrades to the camera next year (late summer of 2016). This site provides some unique challenges, but we are working with Xcel Energy to improve the view. Personally, I find myself completely captivated by just how different the environment is when compared to Decorah and Eagle Valley, and I am really looking forward to the 2016 season.



*The Fort St. Vrain nest, which is at least twelve years old*



*A big thanks to Xcel Energy for their dedication!*



## **Kestrels**

### **Xcel Energy, Pawnee Plant, Brush CO**

The first clutch of kestrel young all perished. Our plant contact thought they might have died following a flood that greatly reduced the area's food resources. Ken Weisser (a great supporter of the kestrel program) noted that the adults fed heavily on lizards, which were either drowned out or unavailable during the flood. The adults reclutched and produced three young, all of which fledged successfully.

### **Xcel Energy Riverside Plant, Minneapolis MN**

We installed a box next to a small prairie planted on the grounds of the Riverside plant's former coal yard. It attracted a pair of kestrels last year and was productive this year, although we don't know how many young fledged. The plant is also home to fox and owls. We'll have to put together a catalog of species at some point – I find all the wildlife at an industrial site in the heart of Minneapolis to be quite fascinating!

### **Nest boxes, Decorah IA**

Three of the six boxes we put up are still standing. While we didn't band this year, Bob did tell us that all three had produced young.

## Acknowledgements

We wrote the Raptor Resource Project's 2015 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 identifying falcons, tracking hatch dates, emailing pictures and observations, helping with banding, and gifting us with donations. You are a crucial part of what we do.

Many thanks to our forum members. Your postings, comments, and contacts document behavior at our nests and help us maintain an increasingly complicated calendar. You are very helpful in our efforts to monitor nests and babies, for which we are deeply grateful – and I hope the problem with the forum is fixed! Forum members, you know what I'm talking about!

Education is part of our mission. A deeply heartfelt thanks to our moderators on Ustream and Facebook – especially Ustream lead mod Pagent and Facebook lead mod Sherri Elliott. Your leadership, dedication, and hard work are a vital part of our success. A shoutout to Pagent for her very hard work organizing the After the Fledge party. I had so much fun watching people meet the mods and other online friends for the first time! It brought home to me how special this group is. Our mods volunteer long hours and are an invaluable source of information and inspiration for millions. Thank you so much for your hard work, knowledge, and experience. We are deeply grateful for the best moderating teams around! A big welcome to our new 2015 lead mods on Ustream! Jfrancl, Faith, and Garden Girl, you are doing a wonderful job!

A thanks also to the people who capture and post video to YouTube, especially 70chico1, mochamama, blossom holland, eaglewhisperer18, dragonlainey, and prairiefirewind. Your hard work makes sure no one misses life in our nests.

Power plants, stackhouses, and other industrial sites have been crucial to the recovery of the peregrine falcon. We really appreciate our partners at Xcel Energy, Dairyland Power, Great River Energy, Minnesota Power and Light, Alliant Energy, Red Wing Grain, Ardent Milling, Bunge North America, Bay State Milling, and US Bank. A shout-out to the staff that help us get it all done, including Paul Lassance, Ricky Socha, Jim Larson, Dean Pagel, Chuck Bremer, Roger, Wayne, Mike McShane, Jim Fuchs, Timothy Lowing, Isaac Bremer, Mike Long, Dan Meyer, Brian Schmidt, Frank Sperlak, Becky Danberg, Bill Wardell, Cheryl Erler, Tina Lopez, Bill Heston, Dave Madonna, Ken Weisser, Naresh Dahagama, Brad Foss, Nathan Helder, Doug Braff, Karen Kiekow, Jeff Blank, Dani Swanson, and Brenda Geisler. You guys help us monitor and band falcons at sites throughout Minnesota, Iowa, Western Wisconsin, and Colorado, and we couldn't do it without you!

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A big thanks to the technical support staff at Ustream and Simms Electronics in Decorah, especially Joanna Dorfman and Alden Fertig from Ustream, and Kenny from Sims Electric. You guys are great! Many thanks to Kike Arnal for climbing with us this year! We couldn't have done it without you.

This year's climbing team consisted of Bob Anderson, Neil Rettig, Kike Arnal, Amy Ries, Dave Kester, David Hecht, and Brett Mandernack. We rappelled down cliffs, we climbed up trees, we grunted up stacks, we banded on grain elevators, and we got the job done!