

# Peregrine Falcon Occupancy in Minnesota State Parks

## 2010 Field Report



2010 brood at Butterwort Cliff, Cascade River State Park, Cook County, MN

Prepared by:  
Jacquelyn M. Fallon  
Minnesota and North Dakota State Coordinator  
Midwest Peregrine Society  
808 West Congress Street  
Pacific, Missouri 63069  
651-485-7218  
[pefgirl@hotmail.com](mailto:pefgirl@hotmail.com)  
[www.midwestperegrine.org](http://www.midwestperegrine.org)

2010 was another successful year for peregrine falcons in Minnesota, and the Midwest in general. This was the 29<sup>th</sup> year of peregrine falcon field work in the Midwestern US, since the initial 1982 releases of captive bred birds along the Mississippi River. The work has changed in its focus from releasing captive bred birds to one of monitoring and studying the birds that nest naturally within the region. The species was federally delisted in August 1999, and in some states, even state delisted. In Minnesota, the peregrine falcon is still listed as a threatened species, and is managed as such. In 2010 we added two natural cliff sites to our list of monitored sites, both in state parks in Minnesota. This brings our total to 11 sites in 9 state parks, and the team banded 21 young at 7 sites.

This project is a great example of community effort at every level-from field monitoring staff, building managers, financial supporters, and state parks, to private property owners, DOT staff, and the climbing staff that accessed over 20 sites and enable us to band the young that would otherwise go unbanded. Lastly, nearly 30,000 miles were logged this year by the field team to accomplish the hundreds of hours of observation, banding and conducting education programming in local communities. Who says we can't all work together and save a species?

All birds are currently banded with a purple anodized US Fish and Wildlife Service band and a alpha-numeric color coded band that can be read via binoculars or a spotting scope. This second band assists the field team in identifying birds on territory, as well as general survivorship. In addition, a small blood sample is taken to be banked and stored at the Bell Museum at the University of Minnesota for future study. Additional information on the project can be found at [www.midwestperegrine.org](http://www.midwestperegrine.org)

If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this report, please do not hesitate to contact either myself, or Dr. Pat Redig, DVM, Coordinator of the Midwest Peregrine Society.

## 1. Successful Pair

5/20/10: Queen's Bluff SNA, Great River Bluffs State Park, Winona County



**Photos:** Queen's Bluff (left); View of the Mississippi River from the top of Queen's (upper right); two of four chicks from 2010 brood (lower right)

### Adult Information

Adult female: b/g

Adult male: Cranberry b/g 17/N

### Nesting Information

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

First egg hatched 4/22/10



Female:	1687-30318	b/r	00/S	Lola
Female:	1687-30319	b/r	01/S	Adah
Female:	1687-30320	b/r	02/S	Janelle
Male:	1126-06647	b/g	H/32	Kluever

### Comments

An adult b/g banded female and six-year-old Cranberry b/g 17/N, a 2004 fledge from Dairyland Power Cooperative, Genoa, WI, nested in the cave eyrie that has been used since 2000. Four young were banded in mid May, one male and three females, and all four were observed to have fledged by mid-June. Jim and Mark Mussell climbed the cliff here and DNR intern James Prusi joined us for the event as well. This site continues to be one of the most productive natural cliffs on the Mississippi River.

*Year falcons first nested here: 2000*

*Total young fledged: 30*

## 2. Successful Pair

5/28/10: Faith Bluff, John Latsch State Park, Winona County



**Photos:** Climber Joel Sniejowski waiting at the box at Faith (left); 2010 chicks in the box after banding (right)

### Adult Information

Adult female: Unbanded adult

Adult male: Spider b/g 68/P

### Nesting Information

3 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg hatched: 5/7/2010

Female: 1687-02037 b/r 04/S Oneota

Female: 1687-21445 b/r 05/S Jen

Male: 2206-72387 b/g H/39 Jacob

### Comments:

In early March, Fallon confirmed that a nesting pair of falcons was nesting on the southernmost cliff within the park. For the third year, Spider, b/g 68/P was paired with an unbanded adult female, possibly the same female who has nested here for the past two seasons. The pair laid 3 eggs, and three chicks were banded, two females and a male. Shawn Fritcher, DNR park specialist assisted the field team with access to the cliff and banding of the young. Lastly, Erica Broberg assisted the field team with valuable observations to determine a safe timeline in banding the young. Jim Mussell and Joel Sniejowski climbed this cliff this season.

Spider, 2003 hatch from Dairyland Power Cooperative plant in Genoa, WI was captured last season to replace his original USFWS band. So far, the band still remains on the bird.

*First year nesting attempted: 1986*

*Total young produced: 7*

### 3. Successful Pair

5/28/10 Precipitace Cliff, Whitewater River State Park, Winona County, Minnesota



**Photo:** Field member Karla Anderson watching the eyrie (left); 2010 brood of chicks in eyrie (right)

#### Adult Information

Adult female: b/g

Adult male: b/g C/35

#### Nesting Information

4 eggs laid | 4 young hatched

First egg hatched 5/10/10

Female:	1687-21436	b/r	06/S	Mary
Female:	1687-21435	b/r	07/S	Rachel
Female:	1687-21442	b/r	08/S	Jane
Male:	2206-72388	b/r	*W/*K	Dorer

#### Comments:

Park Naturalist Dave Palmquist and falconer Erica Broberg once again assisted us in monitoring the site for falcon activity. A pair of adult peregrines, an unidentified b/g adult female was paired with four-year-old male b/g C/35, 2006 hatch from JH Power Plant, Port Sheldon, Michigan. Four very healthy chicks were banded, three females and a single male. All names for the chicks reflect people who have a strong role in conservation either in the state or worldwide. A reporter from the local news paper joined the team this year, as well as numerous park staff who had not been able to join us in 2009. All four young fledged successfully in late June, carefully monitored by the park staff and Erica. Jim Mussell and Joel Sniejowski climbed the site this year.

*First year nesting attempted: 2009*

*Total young produced: 6*

#### 4. Successful Pair

6/8/10 Corundum Point, Split Rock Lighthouse State Park, Lake County



**Photos:** Naturalists from Wolf Ridge that joined us for the banding of the young eyas falcons (left); 2010 brood of chicks (right)

#### Adult Information

Adult female: Unbanded adult

Adult male: Unknown

#### Nesting Information

3 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg hatched: 5/24/2010

Female:	1687-30348	b/r	30/S	Lupine
Male:	1126-14118	b/r	38/C	James
Male:	2206-72391	b/r	39/C	Jo-Jo

#### Comments:

The adult pair of falcons continue to be extremely elusive, with an unknown adult male on territory, paired with an unbanded, very defensive adult female. The pair continue to utilize the same nest ledge as in previous years, one of the most pristine sites on the north shore. In early June, the climbing team retrieved three very healthy chicks. Two males and single female were quickly banded, due to the approaching rain and cold temperatures. From the photo above, you can see the chicks were well fed (large crop below their beaks) and that a large group of student naturalists joined us for the banding from Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center. Peter Smerud and Erin Manning from Wolf Ridge climbed at this site, with assistance from Joe Walewski. Dave Evans assists the field team by monitoring this site in the state.

*First year nesting attempted: 1997*

*Total young produced: 31*

## 5. Successful Pair

6/10/10 Butterwort Cliffs SNA, Cascade River State Park, Cook County



**Photos:** Two male chicks in the eyrie (left); Peter Smerud with chick during banding (right)

### Adult Information

Adult female: Unbanded

Adult male: Unbanded

### Nesting Information

2 eggs laid | 2 young hatched

First egg hatched: 5/14/2010

Female:	1687-30483	b/r	37/S	
Male:	2206-72319	b/g	W/46	Sorlie

### Comments:

Alexis Berke-Hutchins, Katie Bovee and Katie Fritz assisted in monitoring the site to determine nesting success. In April, they found two unbanded adult falcons on territory and incubating an unknown number of eggs. Two chicks were found after several descents along the cliff face, one of each sex. The two chicks were banded in mid June, and observed to have fledged successfully in early July. This is the first successful nesting where we have found the nest and been able to band the young falcons. Joe Walewski and Peter Smerud climbed at the site, both staff at Wolf Ridge ELC.

*First year nesting attempted: 2008*

*Total young produced:3*

## 6. Successful Pair

6/11/2010 Rattlesnake Bluff, Frontenac State Park, Frontenac, Goodhue County



**Photos:** Two of the three chicks after banding (left); Joel holding the female before she returns to the transport box (center); Rattlesnake Bluff (P-51 bluff) cliff face (right)

### Adult Information

Adult female: b/g

Adult male: b/g

### Nesting Information

3 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg hatched: 5/23/2010

Female:	1687-30484	b/r	38/S	Delilah
Male:	1126-06644	b/r	45/C	Izabrd
Male:	1126-06645	b/r	46/C	Kuhlbrd

### Comments:

Jackie Fallon discovered a successful nesting pair in early June, with the pair of unidentified adult b/g banded falcons feeding at least two 12-14 day old chicks. Several phone calls were made to the Park Manager, resource specialist, and MNDNR Resource Management Coordinator Ed Quinn. It was hoped that we would be able to amend our research permit, and receive permission in time to safely band the young. Our permit was amended in a few days and the weather was on our side for once. In our opinion, this cave eyrie is one of the best on the river: remote, clean and difficult for predators (including humans) from accessing the interior of the cave, and the chicks themselves. Three chicks were banded in early June, two males and a single female. Jim Mussell, Mark Mussell and Joel Sniejowski climbed the site, who was directed to the proper descending location by DNR park staff Amy Poss.

To note, a pair of adult falcons were noted to be on territory here in 2007, but were not successful and no other falcons had been observed at the site until this season. In 2007, Fallon was informed that the name of the bluff was Wacouta Bluff, but the US Geology map refers to the bluff as Rattlesnake Bluff.

*First year nesting attempted: 2007*

*Total young produced: 3*

## 7. Successful Pair

6/18/10 Gold Hoist Cliff, Split Rock Lighthouse State Park, Lake County



**Photos:** Erin Manning holding up a chick while at the eyrie (left); Michelle Anderson holding a chick while Jenny Prom takes the blood sample (right)

### Adult Information

Adult female: Unbanded

Adult male: Hunter b/g K/03

### Nesting Information

3 eggs laid | 3 young hatched

First egg hatched 6/1/10

Male: 1126-14119 b/g H/93

Male: 1126-14120 b/r \*S/\*V

### Comments

Dave Evans monitored this site for us this year, which proved to be a difficult site, since sightings of the birds were sporadic, at best. Evans finally discovered that the pair of birds were utilizing a new cliff ledge in the park, farther to the west than the previous year's eyrie. Five-year-old male Hunter b/g K/03, 2005 hatch from Palisade Head at Tettegouche State Park was paired for the second year with an unbanded adult female, most likely the same female as in previous years. A visit to the site in early June showed three chicks being fed by the adult male, and the team made plans to return in a week to band the young. However, at banding time only two chicks were found in the eyrie, with no evidence of what may have happened to the third chick. The two males were banded and found to be in excellent condition with full crops of food. Park staff and others joined us for this site's banding as well. Erin Manning and Karla Anderson climbed this cliff site, with guidance from Peter Smerud of Wolf Ridge ELC.

*First year nesting attempted: 2010*

*Total young produced: 3*

**8. Eggs Laid Pair:** Shovel Point, Tettagouche State Park, Lake County

Dave Evans and Tettagouche park staff discovered a territorial pair of falcons at the site in mid May. An unbanded adult female was paired with an unidentified adult male, and found to be using an eyrie quite a distance from the top of the cliff. On June 24, the banding team observed the female to be brooding at least one young chick, estimated to be 4-5 days old. The team returned July 9<sup>th</sup> to band the young, only to discover that the pair had lost the brood. It cannot be determined to the cause of failure, because it appears that the eyrie should have been well protected from harsh weather. We hope this site will become successful in the future.

*First year nesting attempted: 2010*

*Total young produced: 0*

**9. Eggs Laid Pair:** Palisade Head, Tettagouche State Park, Lake County

Joe Walewski reported that for the second year in a row, this site has not had successful nesting. An unidentified pair of adult falcons chose a nest ledge that has not been used in several years, farther to the east than in the most recent years. In early June, the climbing team descended to the ledge and found two unhatched eggs. The team returned several weeks later and did not find any adults on territory and only a single unhatched egg. Joe Walewski, Erin Manning, Karla Anderson and Jim Mussell climbed the site this year.

State park DNR staff continues to post the area to prevent disturbances to the nesting birds at this popular rock climbing site throughout the nesting and fledging season.

*First year nesting attempted: 1988*

*Total young produced: 57*

**10. Non-breeding pair:** Carlton Peak/Tofte Peak, Temperance River State Park, Cook County

Dave Evans reported that a pair of falcons were on territory, an adult male and an immature female, but did not appear to nest at either last year's site or any other ledge in the area. Both birds remained on territory throughout the summer.

*First year nesting attempted: 2009*

*Total young produced: 3*

**11. Non-breeding pair:** Mendota Bridge, Fort Snelling State Park, Hennepin County

The park staff observed an immature bird on territory in early spring, Tory b/g 97, 2009 hatch from the Bremer Tower in St. Paul, MN. A second unidentified adult female was observed to be on territory in early spring as well, but by mid April, no birds were observed by either Fallon or the park staff, despite intensive efforts and over 30 hours of observation. Tory was named after Dr. Harrison "Bud" Tordoff, in recognition for all which Bud contributed to the recovery of peregrines in the Midwest.

*First year nesting attempted: 1996*

*Total young produced: 26*