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NEWS

Peregrine Falcon Chicks to be Issued IDs

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GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. — Two Peregrine falcon chicks born last month at Minnesota Power's Boswell Energy Center are scheduled to be banded Monday, June 9 at the Cohasset plant near Grand Rapids.

Bob Anderson, project director of the Raptor Research Project, Ridgeway, Iowa, intends to adorn each tiny ball of fluff with its own set of bands, signifying its Midwest origin and identifying it for a University of Minnesota research database. The banding will make it possible to track the birds' activities over their lifetimes, adding to human knowledge of this once-endangered species.

The Peregrine falcon was threatened with extinction during the 1940s and '50s by the use of the pesticide DDT. In 1989, the Raptor Resource Project began working with electric utility personnel to place nesting boxes on stacks at several Minnesota utilities, including Boswell.

This year's chicks are the 11th brood to be born at Boswell to patriarch Bandit and his mates, Skydancer, who failed to return to the nest in 2001, and Windsong. Minnesota Power employees installed the platform in 1991 and the first chicks were hatched there in 1993.

Peregrines, the fastest raptor on earth, winter in vacation spots from Little Rock, Ark., to the tip of Argentina. Sometimes, Peregrines will winter at a power plant if there is enough open water and an adequate nearby food supply, such as pigeons.

Peregrines seek private, high, out-of-the-way homes for nesting, mating and pursuing their prey. In the last few years, about 50 percent of all Peregrine chicks born in the upper Midwest were hatched at secluded homes atop stacks at power plants. The electric industry has played a key role in Peregrine falcon recovery efforts here in Minnesota and the upper Midwest. And, for the first time since 1960, Peregrines are now returning to breed on high cliffs throughout Minnesota, a more natural habitat.

This spring, Minnesota Power added a FalconCam to its Web site, www.mnpower.com, showing continuously updated (about every five seconds) images of the nest and its occupants.

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