

We Energies Peregrine Falcon 2009 Nesting Season Report

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Cover Image: Peepholes at each of the We Energies nest boxes sometimes provide opportunities to read band numbers (right), especially with the use of digital cameras. The image on the cover of this report is “Dave” (b/g) B/36, produced in 2006 at Port Washington Generating Station. On April 9, 2009, Dave and his bands were photographed through a peephole at the Pleasant Prairie Power Plant nest box, where he and his mate successfully nested.



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Pleasant Prairie Power Plant A Complete Turnover of Adults

After the loss of "Duke" (b/r) 1/*P last December, his mate "Breezer" (b/r) *R/*2 stayed the course and by Jan. 14 had attracted a new adult male identified by Bob Reske and me as "Dave" (b/g) P/36. Dave was produced in 2006 at Port Washington Generating Station. Webcam images during January showed the pair in courtship display inside the nest box, and I thought we would be back on track for another successful nesting season here.



Breezer at her nest box on May 5 last year -- likely the last photo taken of her. Between 1999-2008, Breezer produced 32 young at Pleasant Prairie Power Plant.



Images of Dave and his bands taken through peepholes in the nest box.



Then, sometime in February Breezer disappeared. It's not known what happened, but it is unlikely she was displaced by another falcon, as Dave was seen perched alone in the nest box for two weeks afterward.

On March 3, a new female was observed. Dave and this new female were seen regularly in the nest box, and an egg was laid on April 13, after which the female disappeared. Webcam images of her showed a falcon that appeared drowsy. This could have been a common condition called egg lethargy, which females exhibit during egg laying, or she could have been egg bound which is more serious. Another possible explanation is one that came to

mind when I received the necropsy report on Duke, which indicated that avian trichomoniasis was suspected as a possible root cause of his demise. Avian trichomoniasis is caused by a single celled protozoan (*Trichomonas gallinae*). Avirulent and highly virulent strains of this parasite are found in nature and circulate within bird populations. It has been reported that 80-90% of adult pigeons are infected with avian trichomoniasis but show no clinical signs of the disease (Field manual of wildlife diseases: birds, pp. 201-206).

With pigeons being a regular food source for peregrines, consuming an infected pigeon may have been the cause of Duke's death, and possibly Breezer's death as well, and similarly could be affecting the new female at this site. At this point, there is no way of knowing for sure whether avian trichomoniasis is present and nothing really that can be done to prevent but it. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to learn what is happening. In a study I did between 2001-2003, I tested a total of 146 peregrines for the presence of avian trichomoniasis. Overall 12% (18 of 146) tested positive. What was most interesting was that in 2002, the percentage of positive results was 28% (12 of 43). This was four to five times higher than 7% (3 of 43) in 2001 and 5% (3 of 60) in 2003. A possible explanation for this spike in 2002 was a regional winter temperature average about 10 degrees warmer than in 2001 and 2003, which may have had some effect on the prevalence of avian trichomoniasis in local pigeon populations.

Dave brooded/incubated this lone egg on and off over the ensuing two weeks until another adult female arrived on April 24. On April 26, this new b/g banded female laid a pale whitish-colored egg next to the egg laid by the previous female. After this second egg was laid, both adults took turns incubating and amazingly on May 30, the first egg hatched. Normal incubation period is 33-35 days, but this egg hatched 47 days after it was laid. Whether the second egg hatches remains to be seen.

This was only the second time I have seen a situation where two different females laid eggs in the same nest box during the same nesting season. The last time this occurred was at the Port Washington Generating Station in 2006 where an immature female laid one egg and another adult female laid three, two of which hatched.

Adult Female: "Thilmany" (b/g) N/44, produced in 2007 at the Thilmany Mill site in Kaukauna, WI
Adult Male: "Dave" (b/g) B/36, produced in 2006 at We Energies Port Washington Generating Station

Eggs: 2: 1 laid on April 13 by unidentified adult female, 1 laid by "Thilmany" N/44 on April 26

Eggs Hatched: 1 on May 30

Banded: 1 female on May 30

Site Visits: April 9, May 5, 8, 12, June 9, Sept. 21

This site has been active since 1997 producing a total of 38 young. (2.92/year).

Banding Data

| Name | Sex | Color Band | USFWS Band |
|-------------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Chance | Female | (b/r) 49/E | 1687-300362 |

GPS: 42 Degrees 32' 16 N, 87 Degrees 54' 13 W

Oak Creek Power Plant

Two of Four Eggs Hatch

With the owlets fledged and out of the picture here, incubation went smoothly, and two of Atlanta's four eggs hatched May 15-17. On June 5, I was joined by We Energies employees Mike Grisar and Eric Adsen who assisted with banding.



Atlanta at her nest box and her two chicks.

Mike Grisar and Eric Adsen.

Adult Female: Atlanta (b/r) L/*C was wpr in 1996 at the WPS Pulliam Power Plant site in Green Bay, WI. This is Atlanta's 11th year at this site.

Adult Male: "Scott" (b/g) M/Y, here for his 4th year was wpr in 2000 at the Malteurop complex (formerly *Froedtert Malt*) in West Milwaukee, WI.

Eggs: 4 laid between April 7 – 24

Projected Hatch Dates: May 15 – 17

Eggs Hatched: 2 between May 15 – 17

Banded: 1 female and 1 male on June 5

Site Visits: February 27, March 6, April 10, 16, June 5, October 15

This site has been active since 1998 producing a total of 40 young (3.3/year).

Banding Data

| Name | Sex | Project Band | USFWS Band |
|-------|--------|--------------|------------|
| Rose | Female | (b/r) 34/E | 1687-30297 |
| Lumpy | Male | (b/r) 11/B | 1126-06578 |

GPS: 42 Degrees 50' 48 N, 87 Degrees 49' 46

Oak Creek Power Plant Great Horned Owl Nesting Summary

On the morning of Dec. 30, the 8 a.m. webcam image from this site showed a great-horned owl huddled in the back corner of the peregrine nest box – the very same location where the owls nested last year. This first sighting is even earlier than last year's date of Jan. 4.



The three owlets photographed in their nest box on the evening of Feb. 27.

On Jan. 2, Rose Dehli and I visited the nest box and found both adult owls inside. We also found one egg, which is a week earlier than last year when Bob Meidl spotted the first egg on Jan. 8. This was followed up by at least two more, and three eggs hatched between Feb. 5 - 9. The webcam images from Feb. 5 - 7 clearly showed the female owl standing and brooding rather than incubating, and on Feb. 9, the adult male owl spent the entire day in the nest box with his mate and new offspring. On Feb. 27, Bill Holton and I visited the nest, and on March 6, the three youngsters were banded.

All three owlets fledged from this site between April 6 - 14. After the first owlet fledged, it spent a day or two near (and under) a contractor's trailer and was subsequently seen to have flown off into a nearby wooded area. The second owlet to fledge was found grounded and returned to the nest box on April 10. Unfortunately, on its second attempt at fledging, it was killed by one of the resident peregrines. Owlet number three fledged successfully on April 14.

Owl Banding at the Oak Creek Power Plant: A Photo Essay



On the evening of March 6, the three owlets at the Oak Creek Power Plant were weighed, measured and banded. We Energies employees Rose Dehli, Bill Holton and Eric Adsen provided assistance.



Milwaukee area raptor biologist Bill Stout bands great horned owls in the region and banded the owlets at Oak Creek again this season.



Milwaukee Valley Power Plant

On the morning of May 5, we were finally able to ID the adult male here. A digital image taken through one of the peepholes revealed that he is “Swede” (b/g) P/Z who was produced at the Pulliam Power Plant site in Green Bay in 1999. Swede nested at Milwaukee’s Miller Brewery in 2003, was displaced by an immature male in 2004 and returned to nest there in 2005. It is likely Swede has been the unidentified male at VAPP since 2006. On May 8, again looking through a peephole, the adult female was identified as “Jean” (b/g) 19/C, the same female that nested unsuccessfully here last year.

Note: I banded my 500th wild-produced WI peregrine here this year. A very special thanks goes to Noel Cutright, Mike Grisar and Kris McKinney of We Energies for their much appreciated support!



Above: Jean. **Far left:** The two youngsters. **Near left:** Swede’s bands photographed through a peephole. **Below:** Swede.

Adult Female: “Jean” (b/g) 19/C, back for second year

Adult Male: “Swede” (b/g) P/Z

Eggs: 5 laid between March 28 – April 8

Projected Hatch Dates: May 5 – 9

Eggs Hatched: 2 on May 15

Banded: 1 female and 1 male on May 29

Site Visits: April 8, 23, May 5, 8, 19, 29, Oct. 21, 26, 28

This site has been active since 2002 producing a total of 19 young (2.4/year)

Banding Data

| Name | Sex | Project Band | USFWS Band |
|-------|--------|--------------|------------|
| Lilly | Female | (b/g) R/45 | 1687-01876 |
| Butch | Male | (b/r) 06/B | 1126-06520 |

GPS: 43 Degrees 02' 28 N, 87 Degrees 57' 49



Port Washington Generating Station



This is one of three Wisconsin nest sites that I monitor for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. As part of the delisting process for an endangered species (the peregrine in this case), randomly chosen nests throughout the U.S. are closely surveyed every three years over a 15-year period to monitor occupancy and production. If numbers begin to drop, or problems with production occur, the species can be relisted as threatened or endangered. So far, all remains well at PWGS!

Adult Female: "Icon" (b/g) 50/D, produced in 2004 at the LTV Steel site in Cleveland, OH. This is her 4th year at this site.

Adult Male: Unknown, banded b/g 7?/?

Eggs: 4 laid between April 1 – 9

Projected Hatch Dates: May 10 – 12

Eggs Hatched: 3 between May 13 – 16

Banded: 2 females and 1 male on June 2

Site Visits: April 16, June 2, Nov. 9

This site has been active since 2000 producing a total of 34 young (3.4/year).

Banding Data

| Name | Sex | Project Band | USFWS Band |
|--------|--------|--------------|------------|
| Seapro | Female | (b/g) R/97 | 1687-30293 |
| Arro | Female | (b/g) R/43 | 1687-30294 |
| Herzig | Male | (b/r) 10/B | 1126-06577 |

GPS: 43 Degrees 23' 01" N, 87 Degrees 52' 13" W



Above: Icon above her nest box.

Above left: Icon's three chicks safely back in their nest box after banding.

Milwaukee County Power Plant Promising Activity at the Nest Box!

After unconfirmed sightings here this spring, webcam images from May 1 - 11 clearly showed both adult male and female peregrines at the nest box.

On May 11, I spent some time here with my spotting scope watching activity from the parking lot below the nest box. An adult female was perched inside the box and preening when I arrived.



Above: MCPP web cam images from May 20 with insert showing band number

A short time later, an adult male came in, passed in front of the nest box and landed on the catwalk of a nearby chimney. There was considerable calling between the falcons and at 10:15, the male made two more passes in front of the nest box. At that point, the female left the box. What happened then still has me stymied. Once on the wing, the male chased the female to the east driving here to the ground in a wooded area. Afterward, the male went up into a soar and disappeared.

On May 20, Bob Meidl was able to use the webcam to read the band number of the female as **(b/g) K/52**. Her name is “Dixie,” and she was produced in 2007 at the U.S. Bank nest site in La Crosse. Activity waned after this, but a webcam image on May 30 showed an adult female perched inside the nest box once again.

Interestingly, an adult male and immature female attempted to nest at the nearby Mayfair Mall North Tower site this spring and three eggs were laid. Unfortunately, this nest failed, and a poorly timed window-washing project may have been to blame. It also is possible the adult male at the Mayfair site is the same male that was observed at MCPP.

Site Visits: March 5, 26, May 11, 15, 21, 27, June 8, July 8

Presque Isle Power Plant, MI

Still no activity reported from this site. Last year a peregrine was spotted at the nest box in March, but there have been no confirmed sightings since.

We Energies Produced Peregrines Identified/Found Nesting

WISCONSIN

“Verne” (b/g) E/42, was produced at Oak Creek Power Plant in 2007. He paired with female **“Frightful” (b/g) P/15** who was produced in 2007 at the King Plant in Bayport, MN. They produced three young at the MG&E site in Madison. Interestingly, Verne is the brother of **“Shirley” (b/g) N/36** who was also produced at OCPP in 2007 and nested in Indiana (detailed below under Indiana).

“Dave” (b/g) P/36, produced in 2006 at Port Washington Generating Station paired with **“Thilmany” (b/g) N/44**, a female produced at the Thilmany Mill in Kaukauna. They nested at Pleasant Prairie Power Plant and produced one young.

“Beaster” (b/g) 67/M, produced in 2005 at Pleasant Prairie Power Plant paired with female **(b/g) R/13** who was produced in 2007 at the Tower Building site in South Bend, IN. The pair nested at the Racine County Courthouse in Racine producing one young.

“Herbert” (b/g) 80/N, produced in 2004 at Valley Power Plant in Milwaukee paired again with an unbanded female at Milwaukee’s Miller Brewery site producing four young.

ILLINOIS

“Squawker” (b/g) 48/M, a male produced at the Pleasant Prairie Power Plant in 2003 paired with a female banded **(b/g) 64/D** produced at Cedar Rapids, IA in 2004. They nested at the Evanston Library site and produced four young.

“Emily” (b/g) 5*E, a large male banded as a female who was produced at Oak Creek Power Plant in 2000 paired with **“Hercules” (b/r) *D/W** produced in Minneapolis in 1997. The pair was present at the Metropolitan Correctional Center site in Chicago but failed to nest.

“Amazon” (b/g) R/38, a female produced at Oak Creek Power Plant was identified along with a male banded **(b/g) L/N** at the Pilson Park site but the nest box was not occupied.

“Ian” (b/g) 71/N, a male produced at Port Washington Generating Station in 2004 paired with **“Nora” (b/g) P/76** at the Thilmany Mill in Kaukauna. The pair produced four young.

INDIANA

“Shirley” (b/g) N/36, who was produced at Oak Creek Power Plant in 2007 is now nesting in East Chicago, IN at the Inland Steel lime plant (Mittal Steel, Indiana Harbor East). She is paired with a male believed to be **(b/g) 58/N** who was produced in 2004 at the BP Amoco site in Whiting, IN. The pair produced at least one young.

OHIO

"Jesse" (b/g) 97/A, a female produced in 2005 at Port Washington Generating paired with a male named "Pinkie" (b/g) 73/E who was produced in 2003 at the IPL Stout Plant in Indianapolis. The pair nested at the J. M. Stuart Power Plant in Aberdeen, OH and produced four young.

Production at We Energies Peregrine Falcon Nest Sites 1997-2009

| Year | 97 | 98 | 99 | 00 | 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 08 | 09 | Totals |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Site | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pleasant Prairie Power Plant | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 37 |
| Oak Creek Power Plant | | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 39 |
| Port Washington Generating Station | | | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 34 |
| Milwaukee Valley Power Plant | | | | | | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 19 |
| Neenah, Minergy | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | 2 |
| Presque Isle Power Plant, MI | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Milwaukee County Power Plant | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yearly and grand totals: | 2 | 7 | 6 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 15 | 13 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 12 | 8 | 131 |

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| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
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