

NEWS

Young falcons to take wing with names chosen by Minnesota Power customers

Duluth, Minn. – Five peregrine falcon chicks that hatched this spring in Minnesota Power nest boxes have been named, banded and are getting ready to fledge in the coming days.

Customers voted for their favorite names—all twists on famous names in aviation history—and the winners are:

Orville and Wilbur Right Side Up for the male and female chick at Hibbard Renewable Energy Center in Duluth, for the Wright brothers who made the first powered, heavier-than-air flight, laying the foundation for the invention of the airplane. (Yes, we threw gender-related naming conventions to the wind for chicks at both sites.)

At Boswell Energy Center in Cohasset, the three female chicks are Amelia Earthworm (Amelia Earhart, first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic), Joe Racing Homer (Joe Gomer, one of the famed Tuskegee Airmen who flew 68 combat missions in World War II), and Neil Wingstrong (Neil Armstrong, first person to walk on the moon.)

Teams from the [Raptor Resource Project](#) in Decorah, Iowa, visited Boswell last week and Hibbard earlier this month to band the chicks. At Boswell, one of the RRP experts was able to calm the unusually protective mother falcon and hold her so others on the team could access the nest box and place ID bands around the chicks' legs. Adult peregrines typically leave the nest box during banding, showing their displeasure with the intrusion from a distance, but this parent didn't want to leave the chicks.

Minnesota Power is a longtime partner with the RRP, and specialists from the nonprofit organization visit Hibbard and Boswell almost every year. Chicks were banded most years, but not every year, since 1993 at Boswell and 2008 at Hibbard. Banding was canceled last year because of the pandemic.

The RPP continues to work with Minnesota Power and other power companies across the Midwest to provide falcon nest boxes and do the leg banding that helps to maintain a healthy population. The leg bands allow researchers to track the falcons and their behavior, and do not harm the birds.

The peregrine falcon has made a remarkable comeback after use of the pesticide DDT nearly wiped out the population. The raptor was named an endangered species in the 1970s and power companies like Minnesota Power played a role in the peregrine's recovery by placing nest boxes on the stacks of their power plants. More than 30 chicks have hatched at Hibbard and more than 80 have hatched at Boswell since nest boxes were installed at the two sites.

The commitment to peregrine falcons is one example of Minnesota Power's longstanding value of environmental stewardship. Under the company's EnergyForward strategy, Minnesota Power became the first utility in Minnesota to deliver 50% renewable energy to customers and in January announced its vision to deliver 100% carbon-free energy by 2050.

Bird enthusiasts from around the world are able to tune in to Minnesota Power's [FalconCam](#) and watch as falcons return to the nest boxes each spring, lay their eggs and raise their young.

VIDEO:

Amy Ries of the Raptor Resource Project holds the mother falcon and releases her after banding is completed.
<https://youtu.be/lpEfRX2oIGI>

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

Spencer Bloch, who works at Boswell Energy Center, holds one of the three female peregrine falcon chicks that hatched there.

Minnesota Power employee Doug Braff, holds one of the three female peregrine falcon chicks at Boswell Energy Center.

The chicks at Hibbard and Boswell sport new identification bands. Chicks hatched at Hibbard on May 8 and at Boswell May 19-21.

With support from a safety team, banders climb the stack at Hibbard to the nest box located on a catwalk.

Minnesota Power provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in Northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security and quality of life for 145,000 customers, 15 municipalities and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. More information can be found by visiting www.mnpower.com.

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