



For Release: June 16, 2023

Contact: Amy Rutledge  
Director - Corporate Communications  
Minnesota Power/ALLETE  
218-723-7400  
arutledge@mnpower.com

## With ID bands in place, Minnesota Power falcon chicks almost ready to fly

Duluth, Minn. — Four peregrine falcon chicks are sporting new identification bands on their legs after a team of Minnesota Power employees and experts from the [Raptor Resource Project](#) visited their nest box last week at Hibbard Renewable Energy Center.

The team climbed Hibbard's stack to a catwalk some 120 feet above the facility's roof where the four chicks—two males and two females—huddled together in the nest box and their parents patrolled overhead.

Company employees assisted John Howe, director at the Raptor Resource Project based in Decorah, Iowa, as he checked each chick and placed a band with a federally assigned number on the right leg and a second band distributed regionally by the Midwest Peregrine Society on the left leg. All four chicks appeared healthy although one required a little extra attention to clean its beak and nostrils.

The leg bands allow researchers to track and study the falcons, including changes in range, population numbers and migratory behaviors. People often ask if the bands will constrict the falcons' legs as they grow. According to the RRP specialists, the birds' legs are nearly full grown at this point so the bands will not harm them.

Three of the chicks are 22 days old and one is 21 days. Falcons fledge between 38 and 43 days, so these birds have a few more weeks before they fly. Bird enthusiasts can keep tabs on the youngsters' progress at Minnesota Power's [FalconCam](#).

Minnesota Power is a longtime partner with the RRP, and specialists from the nonprofit organization visit Hibbard and Boswell Energy Center in Cohasset almost every year. No eggs were laid at Boswell this spring, possibly because the resident adults didn't return after migration and a series of peregrines battled for the open territory with no clear winner emerging.

Falcons first nested at Hibbard in 2008 and 38 young have been produced at the facility.

The RRP 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 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.

Minnesota Power provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security and quality of life for 150,000 customers, 14 municipalities and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. More information can be found at [www.mnpower.com](http://www.mnpower.com).



VIDEO LINK TO HIBBARD BANDING:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKTSRrCQ4eg&t=4s>

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

Jake Lindberg, a Minnesota Power employee, holds one of the falcon chicks as John Howe of the Raptor Resource Project checks for any health issues. Employees who assisted the RRP specialists were selected by lottery.

MP employee Doug Braff holds one of the chicks as one of the peregrine parents patrols the activity on the Hibbard catwalk.

Getting to the nest box on the catwalk required climbing the ladder for about 100 feet on the outside of the Hibbard stack. This is the view down partway up the ladder. Some members of the team remained on the facility's roof.

Michelle Oyler, a Minnesota Power employee, holds one of the falcon chicks as John Howe of the Raptor Resource Project prepares to band. The team wore masks to protect the falcons against any potential transmission of avian flu.

Three of the four falcon chicks in the nest box.

At about three weeks old, the chicks are covered in downy white feathers.

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