Fort Wayne's Peregrine Falcons

By Mary Koher & Bob Walton

From the 1940s to the 1970s, DDT and other chemicals were used as insecticides in agricultural and other settings. When it was learned that the chemicals affected the shells of the eggs by making them so thin that during incubation the eggs were crushed by the incubating parent, DDT was banned in the United States. In the early 1990s, the peregrine falcon population had plummeted to the point that the birds were listed as endangered in the Midwest. Fast forward to the 1990s and, thanks to a collaboration between the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (INDNR), falconers, and Indiana Audubon, approximately 14 peregrine falcon youngsters were hacked from the top of the former Anthony Wayne Bank Building in downtown Fort Wayne and several other locations in Indiana, in an effort to help restore the peregrine population.

In the mid 1990s, Indiana-Michigan Power and the INDNR worked together to place the current nesting box on top of Fort Wayne's tallest building, with the hope of attracting a nesting pair of peregrine falcons. Hopes were answered in 1996, when a banded female named Freedom (band # U/*8, hacked from Evansville, IN in 1994) and an un-banded male arrived. The pair had 2 chicks that year. From 1997-2007 Freedom returned, but with a new mate: Roosevelt (band # R/*4, hacked from Columbus, OH in 1995). During the 10 years they were together, Freedom and Roosevelt had 34 chicks. From 2008 to 2012, Freedom returned but laid no eggs. She died in 2013 at age 19. During her lifetime, 36 falcons were added to the population.

Then came Moxie, a female (band # 99/E, hacked from Canton, OH in 2011)!! Jamie, a male (band # 92/D, hacked from Port Sheldon, MI in 2010), showed up in 2013, and this pair has been the resident pair for the past 10 years. Together they have raised 33 banded chicks!! The Indiana-Michigan Falconcam is viewed and enjoyed around the world. It is through the efforts of observers like Birds Cams Around the World (BCAW) that we know that locations have been documented for two of Moxie and Jamie's offspring from hatch year 2019: Flash, a male (band # M/52) who appeared in 2022, is now the resident male in South Bend, IN and has successfully raised 2 chicks this year with an un-banded female; and Carla, a female (band # S/07, named after Carla Simpson, a long-time I&M employee who retired that same year), appeared in May 2023 at the Cathedral of Learning in Pittsburgh, PA, but it is likely too late this year for any breeding to occur for Carla, so it is uncertain whether she will stick around or return to this nest next year.

With just two breeding pairs, the Fort Wayne nest has produced 69 banded and fledged peregrine falcon chicks in its 27 years of existence!

You can view the peregrine family tree on our website at :
https://www.soarinhawk.org/content/fort-wayne-peregrine-falcon-project-family-tree