

Janie Fink, raptor biologist with Birds of Prey Northwest, is the release site coordinator for the Rapid City, South Dakota peregrine falcon release project. Janie holds one of the first 4 young falcons delivered to the Assurant Building in downtown Rapid City. The 5-week-old birds will be held at the site for 7-10 days to acclimate them to the area. Birds are isolated from people, but monitored closely for health or safety issues.





Spacious compartments (left) will house groups of chicks, sorted by size and age. The front door will be lowered to allow birds to leave when ready to fly, but food will continue to be provided as they learn to hunt on their own. At right is a view into a compartment as finishing touches are made to the hack boxes. The structure is weighted to withstand heavy winds.



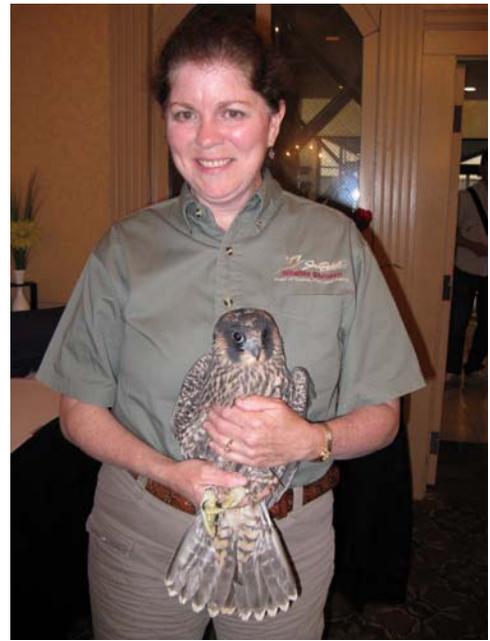
A view from the rooftop release area. Peregrine falcons have adapted well to life in urban environments, preying on pigeons, starlings, and other common birds. This state endangered species historically nested in the Black Hills and in Harding County in northwestern South Dakota.



Janie examines one of the first birds to arrive. In 2011, 15-20 chicks will be released., with hopes that some may survive long enough to breed. To be successful in reestablishing the peregrine falcon as a breeding species, releases will need to continue in future years.



Three corporate sponsors are acknowledged at a press conference in Rapid City on May 27, 2011. From left to right, they are Rex Caldwell of the Assurant Company, Mike Tice of Black Hills Power and Light and Kareem Merali of the Radisson Hotel. The first 4 chicks were named by staff at the Assurant Building—Rush (named after Rapid City’s hockey team), Weaver, Calamity Jane and Sodak (short for South Dakota). Corporate and volunteer help will be critical to the success of the project.



A color leg band is applied to the right leg of a female chick by Janie, volunteer Don Veldkamp and Eileen Dowd Stukel of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. A silver-colored leg band is attached to the left leg (below). Each band is uniquely numbered. Birds will also be marked with temporary, non-toxic paint on a small portion of the wings to allow spotters to identify birds by release groups.

