



## SAULT STE. MARIE BRIDGE AUTHORITY

SAULT STE. MARIE, ONTARIO

HELEN GILLESPIE, CHAIR  
RICK TALVITIE, MEMBER  
GLENN HEWUS, MEMBER

SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN

NICHOLAS WHITE, VICE CHAIR  
LINDA HOATH, MEMBER  
SCOTT SCHACKLETON, MEMBER  
THOMAS BUCKINGHAM SR., MEMBER

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2015**

### **CONTACT:**

**Phil Becker, International Bridge Administration, 906-635-5255, ext. 112, or  
705-942-4345, ext. 112**

**Dan Weingarten, MDOT Office of Communications, 906-485-6322, ext. 136**

## **Falcons hatch at International Bridge**

### **Fast Facts:**

- **A pair of peregrine falcons has successfully nested on the Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge, where the birds have been returning for years.**
- **Four chicks have hatched this year and have been banded by DNR biologists.**
- **The peregrine falcon is listed as an endangered species in Michigan.**

**June 18, 2015** -- A pair of regular visitors to the Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge have made the trip again this year – and they're staying to raise their family.

Karl Hansen, bridge engineer for the International Bridge Administration (IBA), reported that pair of peregrine falcons have successfully nested atop the bridge between the U.S. and Canada this spring, hatching four chicks.

IBA General Manager Phil Becker said the bridge's steeplejacks closely watch for the falcons to return each year.

"As time allows, they monitor the nest without disturbing the birds," Becker said. "Our staff really looks forward to the return of the birds and waits with great anticipation for the occasional reports coming in from our steeplejacks on the growth of the chicks."

The reports this year have been excellent.

All four young birds – three females and one male – were successfully banded Tuesday by biologists from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). According to DNR wildlife biologist Kristie Sitar, color-coded bands attached to the legs of young birds allow scientists to track the movements, reproductive behavior and population growth of the falcons.

In addition to their leg bands, the peregrine chicks received names Tuesday: the females are Jasina, Dwaynette and Q, while the lone male is named Frank.

The successful hatching is the culmination of an ongoing commitment by the IBA. Nest boxes for the peregrines have been installed since 2010 on the both the U.S. and Canadian arches but the birds had been visiting the bridge for many years prior to that. The same pair of adults has been returning to the U.S. side nest each year but, so far, none have taken up residence in the nest box at the Canadian arch.

Sitar said peregrines have been active at the International Bridge since 1999. Before the nest boxes were installed, the falcons laid their eggs in gravel on the exposed pier top – and there were unfortunate instances of eggs and chicks being blown off. Hansen counted 18 chicks hatched out of the nest boxes since they were installed.

"The key point is that the survival rate for the chicks has greatly increased with installation of the nest boxes," Hansen said.

MDOT also has boxes with nesting falcon pairs on the Portage Lake Lift Bridge between Houghton and Hancock and on the Mackinac Bridge. Every nesting site is special – Sitar said there are only 46 nest sites in the entire state and 38 of them are on artificial structures. Most of the natural sites are inaccessible for banding birds, so the artificial sites are even more important.

"The very large majority of birds breeding in Michigan are using artificial structures," Sitar said. "And the birds tend to return to nest in the same type of structures they were fledged from."

The peregrine falcon has been removed from the federal endangered species list, but is listed as an endangered species in Michigan, protected by state and federal law. The hatchlings at the International Bridge are examples of the species' urban comeback. Peregrines have adapted to city habitats, nesting on tall buildings, smokestacks and bridges around the world. Sitar said studies have found birds tend not to nest in the same area where they were hatched, but spread out across the Midwest.

High-speed hunters capable of flying at 200 mph, the peregrines help keep populations of nuisance pigeons under control at MDOT bridges.

For more information on the International Bridge, please visit [www.saultbridge.com](http://www.saultbridge.com) or follow us on twitter at [www.twitter.com/saultbridge](https://www.twitter.com/saultbridge).

###

**Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge:  
Bridging Our Past, Connecting Our Future**



**Four peregrine falcon eggs shown at the nest box on the Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge this spring. (IBA photo)**



**The four peregrine falcon chicks – three female and one male – successfully hatched. (IBA photo)**



**Wildlife research technician Erin Largent, right, and the rest of a Michigan DNR team put identifying bands on the four peregrine falcon chicks which successfully hatched at the Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge this year. (IBA photo)**