

Fuzzy falcon chicks who nest at Michigan State football stadium get tracking bands

May 24 2023, by Mike Householder



A peregrine falcon is held before being banded, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. A state wildlife biologist banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio

Newly fitted with tracking bands, four peregrine falcon chicks named

Pickles, Muhammad, Egbert and Swooper have a nest in one of the best seats—make that perches—at Michigan State University's football stadium.

Scientists and [college students](#) on Wednesday carefully attached metal tracking bands to the fluffy white chicks' legs. At about a month old, they're still not much bigger than a pigeon and can't yet fly away from their manmade nest atop Spartan Stadium. But the boisterous birds already have sharp talons and beaks, so the banding process was handled with care.

The chicks weren't too happy about the experience, writhing and squawking. Once a tag was applied to a [chick](#)'s leg, the bird was placed back in a box. And the squawking ceased.

The chicks have become celebrities in East Lansing and around the globe, thanks to a web camera and [livestream](#) by the school's Fisheries and Wildlife Club, which installed the nest box on the stadium roof last year. The chicks could be seen resting calmly in their nest later Wednesday, under the watchful eye of a parent.

Club members helped band the chicks on the stadium's 8th floor near the press box, overseen by Chad Fedewa, a wildlife biologist with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.



A peregrine falcon flies above Spartan Stadium, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. A state wildlife biologist banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio

Moments earlier, Fedewa and Jim Schneider with the university's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife journeyed up to the roof to retrieve the chicks despite their parents—Freyja and Apollo—angrily screeching and hovering above. They were named in a Twitter contest, and a Michigan [elementary school](#) decided on the chicks' monikers.

"I've seen what they do when you have to get to their chicks. Fortunately, they didn't get too close," said Schneider, who held an umbrella aloft in case mom or dad made a move toward the humans tasked with retrieving

their offspring.

"They make a lot of noise, but they're not too intimidating," he said, adding that there were "a couple of stoops in there," referring to a falcon's hunting dive.

Peregrine falcons are considered the world's fastest birds. They can reach 200 mph (322 kph) during a dive.



A peregrine falcon flies near its nest as Jim Schneider, right, assists Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Chad Fedewa pick peregrine chicks for banding, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. Fedewa banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio



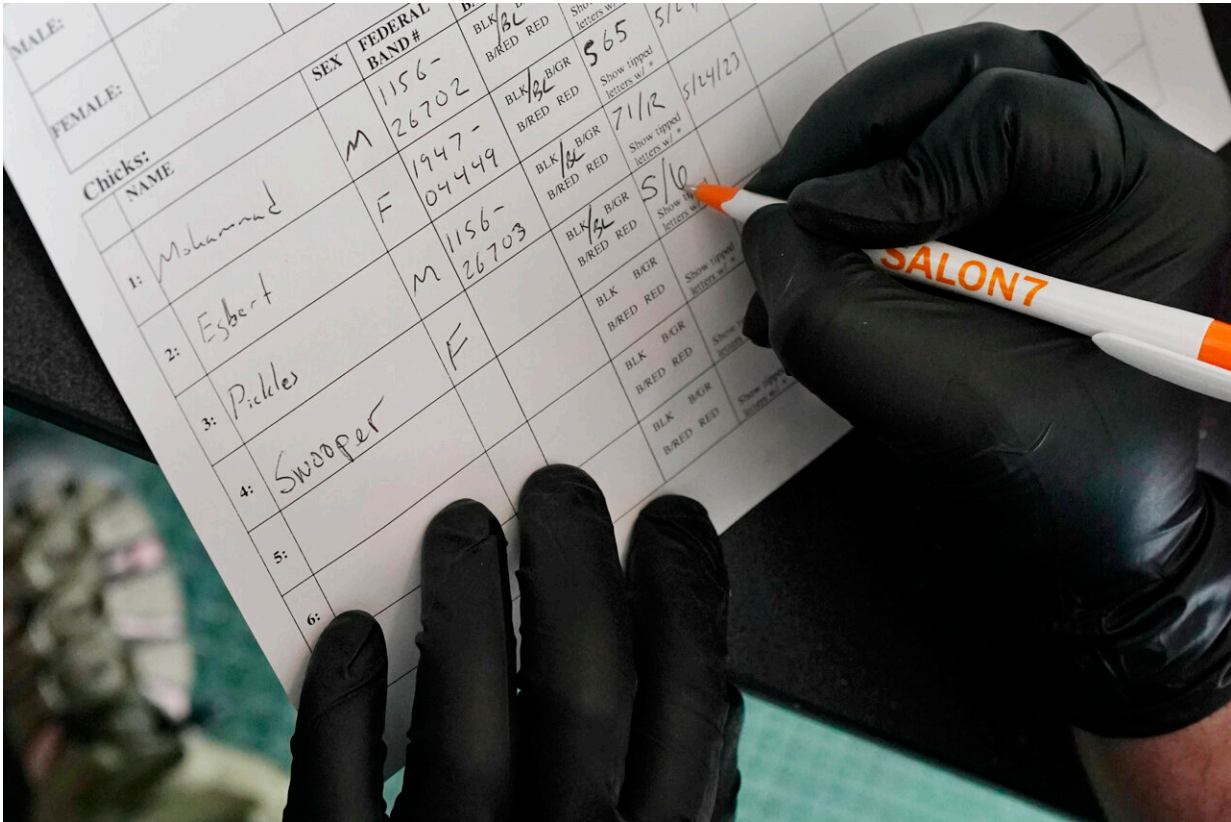
A pair of peregrine falcons are seen on the roof of Spartan Stadium, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. A state wildlife biologist banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio



Michigan State Fish and Wildlife Club President Molly Engelman holds a peregrine falcon chick after it was banded by Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Chad Fedewa, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. Fedewa banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio



Michigan State Fish and Wildlife Club President Molly Engelman holds a peregrine falcon chick after it was banded by Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Chad Fedewa, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. Fedewa banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio



Information on each peregrine falcon that was banded is recorded, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. A state wildlife biologist banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio



Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Chad Fedewa climbs a ladder to return four peregrine chicks, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. Fedewa banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio



Michigan State University Fish and Wildlife Club member Molly Engelman assists Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Chad Fedewa in banding a peregrine chick, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. Fedewa banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio



Michigan State University Fish and Wildlife Club members Andy Piovesana, left, and Molly Engelman assists Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Chad Fedewa in banding a peregrine chick, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. Fedewa banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio



Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Chad Fedewa bands a peregrine chick, Wednesday, May 24, 2023, in East Lansing, Mich. Fedewa banded four peregrine falcon chicks that live in a nest situated on the top of Spartan Stadium, home of Michigan State University's football team. Credit: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio

The American birds were declared endangered in the 1970s due to ingesting prey that was poisoned by pesticides. Recovery programs have brought the raptor back from potential extinction.

Now that the chicks are tagged, researchers will be able to keep tabs on the birds' eventual migration patterns and survival rate. Until then, viewers at home can follow along as the baby falcons grow up.

"It's really gratifying to see people get involved with it and make the same [personal connections](#) that we do," said Molly Engelman, the club's president and a senior from Plymouth, Michigan. "It's like they're our children, a little bit."

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