

Falcon nest box on Kodak headquarters supports species comeback

by: **Donna Timmons**

Worldwide Director, Health, Safety and Environment

As an increasing human population claims more and more room for our homes, recreation, work and infrastructure, we often displace the other creatures who share the planet. Sometimes, the results are tragic. The loss of habitat can contribute to the extinction of both plants and animals. In some cases, the only way to prevent this is to preserve a habitat in its original form. But once in awhile, wild creatures can adapt and thrive in suburban, or even urban landscapes, especially if they get a little help.

That's exactly what Kodak has done at our headquarters in Rochester, New York. In 1995, in cooperation with the Rochester Peregrine Falcon Project, we placed nest boxes on Kodak Office Tower. The boxes are about 64 meters (210 feet) from the ground. They were first used in 1998. Since then, our nesting falcons have returned each year and successfully raised over 20 chicks (called eyas).

Creating new habitat

Nest-box programs have been critical to saving peregrine falcons. Scientists estimate that year-to-year, only about a quarter of these birds survive. The rest of the population is lost to parasites, poisons and accidents. Nest-box programs have been so

successful that in 1999, the U.S. federal government removed the falcon from its endangered species list.

One of the worst threats to these birds is pesticide, particularly DDT. By the time that substance was banned in 1972, only 39 nesting pairs remained in North America. Furthermore, as the falcon's population declined, great horned owls assumed the falcon's former ecological niche, complicating its reintroduction. Scientists devised the nesting box program to give falcons a new habitat. As it turned out, urban settings are ideal. Peregrines feed primarily on other birds. North American cities are home to a variety of non-native species, including pigeons, starlings and sparrows.

Eye on the eyas

Kodak's participation in the Rochester Peregrine Falcon Project also helps to educate people, including school children, on the need to take care of our environment.

It should come as no surprise that one of our most effective tools is photography. We've mounted four digital cameras around our nest box, including a Kodak DC4800 zoom camera in a weatherproof housing. The images can be viewed from the Kodak website at www.kodak.com/birdcam, beginning in early March, when the falcons return to the nesting box. The female will lay her eggs about a month later; the eyas will hatch in mid-May and fledge about a month after that.

A birdcam curriculum is also provided on the site to help teachers and educators incorporate information about falcons in their classrooms.

Being a good steward often means preventing human activities from degrading the environment. But once in awhile, we can do a bit more, and bring back something that seemed all but lost. For this reason, supporting the Rochester Peregrine Falcon Project is among our proudest environmental programs. ■

Main Pic: Falcon mother feeding her young inside one of the nesting boxes on the Kodak Office Tower.

Right: Falcon inside one of the nesting boxes on the Kodak Office Tower.

