

'May the Fourth' be with them: Watch what happens before falcon chicks take first flight

Video captures Mill Creek falcon banding event

Editor's Note: [Click here for raw video file](#). See attached photos.

(LOUISVILLE, Ky.) – Before flying for the first time to parts unknown — or even a galaxy far, far away — officials with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources prep four peregrine falcon chicks for their next adventure.

The two female and two male chicks began hatching in April and have been growing inside the falcon nest box 300 feet above ground at Louisville Gas and Electric Company's Mill Creek Generating Station.

Viewers get to watch up-close — not from a charismatic droid sidekick but from a mobile camera — what it's like to study a peregrine falcon chick. In the video, KDFWR Avian Biologist Loren Taylor and her team attach unique leg bands that will allow North American biologists to track these "millennium" falcons upon leaving the nest for years to come.

Since early March, viewers have watched the chicks from the [live falcon web cam](#) hosted on the website of LG&E and its sister utility, Kentucky Utilities Company. More than 200,000 viewers have tuned into the live camera since 2013, when LG&E, in partnership with KDFWR, launched Kentucky's first live web cam of this type inside the nest box.

About the banding process

The banding process involves briefly removing the four chicks from the nest and attaching unique leg bands with different colors and number codes. This identifying information is then entered into a database along with the bird's gender, date of hatching and nesting place. Biologists will be able to read the numbers on the bands with high-powered optics.

Taylor also checks the chicks for feather mites and performs medical tests to check for a treatable avian disease that can affect their survival.

Once banded, the falcons are placed back in the nest box where they will remain until they take flight. KDFWR has placed nest boxes at many sites throughout Kentucky, including locations at LG&E and KU's Trimble County, Cane Run, Ghent and E.W. Brown power plants.

For more than 20 years, LG&E and KU employees have ensured the nest boxes at the company's power plants provide a safe setting for peregrine falcons to prosper. More than 100 falcons have hatched from these nest boxes.

About the nest box

Diana, the famous female peregrine falcon, has been nesting at Mill Creek since 2006. The nest box was installed at Mill Creek approximately 10 years ago. Power plant crevices and alcoves remind the falcons of natural nesting locations, such as mountain cliffs and ledges. Falcons eat smaller birds, so the power plants

provide ample food supply with populations of pigeons and starlings.

While peregrine falcons are native to Kentucky, the population severely declined in the mid-1900s. But peregrine falcons are making a big comeback in Kentucky, mainly due to the outlawing of the pesticide DDT and a falcon release program that occurred in Kentucky in the '90s. KDFWR is continuing to aid in peregrine falcon productivity by supplying nest boxes around the state.

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Louisville Gas and Electric Company and Kentucky Utilities Company, part of the PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL) family of companies, are regulated utilities that serve nearly 1.3 million customers and have consistently ranked among the best companies for customer service in the United States. LG&E serves 322,000 natural gas and 403,000 electric customers in Louisville and 16 surrounding counties. KU serves 546,000 customers in 77 Kentucky counties and five counties in Virginia. More information is available at www.lge-ku.com and www.pplweb.com.

For further information: Call the LG&E and KU media hotline at 502-627-4999.

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