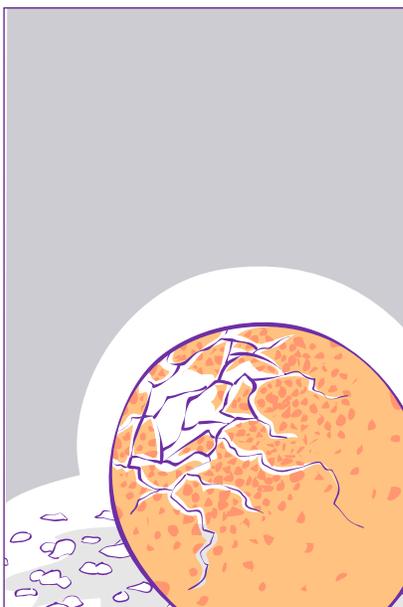
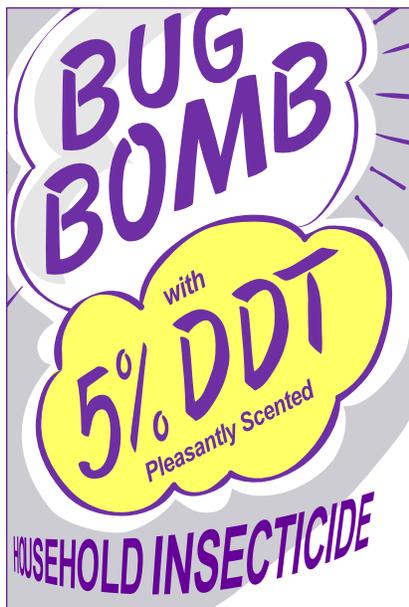


Return of the Peregrine Falcon



WORKING TOGETHER

DDT – a once common pesticide – nearly wiped out the species east of the Mississippi River. The return of the peregrines could not have taken place without the aid of concerned humans and companies like Xcel Energy.

BROKEN EGGS

Beginning in the 1940s, DDT was widely used in the United States and became part of the food chain. Insects killed by the pesticide were eaten by a variety of birds, which then were eaten by peregrine falcons. As a result of the DDT in their diet, peregrines laid eggs with shells so thin that they couldn't support the weight of the parent birds sitting on them. The eggs were destroyed, along with the young birds inside.

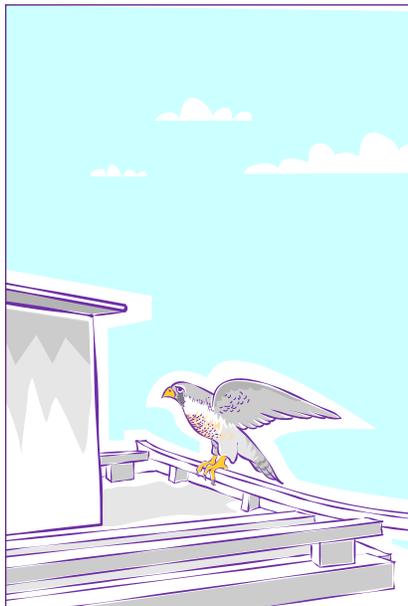
NEAR EXTINCTION

In the early 1940s Joseph Hickey, a Wisconsin biologist, determined that there were more than 200 pairs of peregrines east of the Mississippi River. But by 1968 there were no peregrines east of the Mississippi River at all. Because no babies were being hatched, the peregrine population had dwindled to 19 pairs in the western United States by the mid-1970s. The species was close to being extinct.



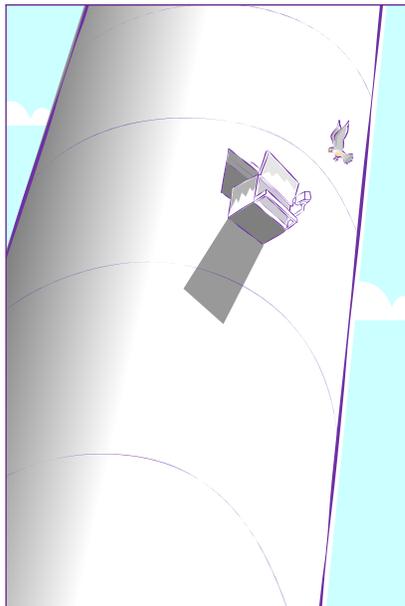
In 1962, Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* pointed out the dangers of DDT. Ten years later, its use was banned in the United States.

Return of the Peregrine Falcon



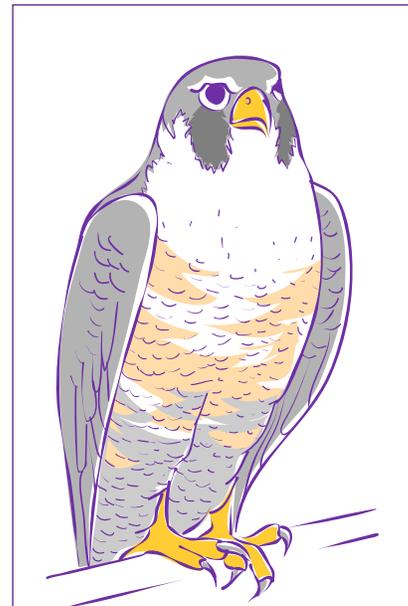
NEST BOXES

To help bring peregrine falcons back to the Midwest, Xcel Energy, the Raptor Resource Project and many concerned groups have provided the birds with places to nest. They have built nest boxes and platforms on buildings and other tall structures. In 1987 three young falcons were successfully fledged from a high rise in downtown Minneapolis.



POWER PLANTS

In 1989, Xcel Energy became the first utility company in the world to install nest boxes on the stacks of its power plants. The project grew, along with peregrine populations, to include active nest boxes at nearly all of our Minnesota power plants. In addition to our Minnesota plants, most of our Colorado power plants now have nest boxes. The idea now has spread across the United States and to countries as far away as Italy and Vietnam.



SUCCESS

Peregrine falcons hatched in nest boxes on buildings and power plant stacks have adapted to life in these new settings. They have accepted the tall structures as substitutes for the cliffs where they usually make their nests. Most peregrines now living in the Upper Midwest started life in human-installed nest boxes. When the time comes to raise their own young, they build nests in these same kinds of places. Scientists are now placing nest boxes on river bluffs and using other techniques to try to return peregrines to their traditional nesting grounds.

By 1999, peregrines had reproduced enough to be taken off the endangered species list in the United States. This milestone marks an incredible comeback for nature's "Top Gun" – the fastest bird of prey.

