

Release Report 2016--Elisabeth Leix

All breeders offered to support the peregrine release project in advance of the 2016 season. After the spring edition of our newsletter, *Tinnunculus*, some members also agreed to undertake a journey to Poland, if required.

The start of the breeding season was promising. Soon, however, bad news was conveyed to me by the breeders. No one, with the exception of Prof. Saar's breeding and research center in Hamburg, could provide young falcons for the reintroduction program. Reasons given by the Bavarian and Baden-Wuerttemberg breeders included the old age of their breeding stock, poor hatching results, and the high demand for falconry birds. Sadly, even the production in Hamburg did not meet expectations. In the end, after several losses and the retention of young for breeding stock, there were only 9 young falcons available from Germany for the release project.

Like last year, Prof. Ernst Flueh, Anneliese and Gerhard Hasenaecker, and Przemysław Mierzejewski delivered peregrines to Poland, this season in three different groups. Because the Bavarian and Baden-Wuerttemberg breeders were unable to provide falcons, my planned trip to Poland fell through. However, Sławek Sielicki kept me updated on the events, allowing me to follow the progress of reintroduction and resettlement.

A total of 38 peregrines were provided from breeding facilities in Poland, Germany, and Slovakia. Some young were installed in release boxes while others were added to wild broods to augment production. Established nest sites produced 21 peregrines and only two young did not reach fledging age. Although fewer falcons than expected were available for the year's release effort, the results are satisfactory. More than anything else, the productivity of wild-hatched peregrines speaks to the success of this project. Given that our reintroduction efforts started only six years ago, in 2010, we can be very proud of our joint accomplishments and confident about the future of our peregrine reintroduction program.

At the Milicz location, 12 young falcons were released from the boxes. All developed normally and achieved independence. We offered a new nest, but the adult pair from last year (♂Menneke, ♀Czech Republic) once again occupied an open release box. They hatched three young falcons and three more were added when the birds were banded. Through observation, we determined that the female from the previous year had mated with a new tiercel from Germany. Unfortunately, the ring numbers could not be clearly seen, but the color combination suggested the origin of this male.

In Barlinek, no falcons were released as there are already several established pairs of marked and unmarked peregrines in the area. At Barlinek #1, the previous pair (♀Saar, ♂Czech Republic) that occupied the new platform in 2015 moved back to an open release box. They hatched two young falcons. At banding time, two more young were added. The pair occupying Barlinek #2 last year also hatched two young falcons, which were banded at 3 weeks of age. Unfortunately these young birds disappeared, like last year, two days after banding. We can only speculate about the reason: accident, crime, or predation?

In Nowe Ramuki, Mazury, we found a new female mated with the adult tiercel (♂ Saar 2011) from the previous year. The new female was ringed, bred in Slovakia 2013 and released in 2013 in Poland. This pair produced four young falcons, which fledged and dispersed. At the reintroduction location in Olsztyn, about 8 km distant, no falcons were released. The eastern most release location, at Krynki, was again supervised by local falconers. The two released falcons fledged successfully and were observed to independence.

After nest-site renovations, due to the size and instability of the nest in Trzebież West Pomeranian (about 25 km north-east of Szczecin), the site was occupied, likely by the pair from last year. They produced and raised three young to fledgling stage. Eventually, it was confirmed that the tiercel was from the first wild breeding at Barlinek 2012, and the female was a released falcon bred in Poland.

The pair at the Dębno site (110 km south of Szczecin, West Pomerania, near the German border), raised three young. This was the same pair that displayed at a See Eagle nest in 2015 but did not breed. This season, they used an abandoned raven nest located nearby. While banding the three young falcons, the adult tiercel was identified as having been bred, banded, and fledged in Germany in 2013. Its mate was captive-bred in Slovakia and released in Barlinek in 2011.

At the location in Włocławek, Central Poland, 16 peregrines were released from three reintroduction boxes without any losses.

Good news came from western Poland, where two more new occupied territories were confirmed. First breeding was reported from Chojna, about 40 km north of Dębno. This pair chose a “witch's broom” for a nest, which was created by an abnormal tree growth. Here, the pair raised two young peregrines. Due to the limited space in the nest, no more chicks were added. The adults were ringed but, unfortunately, the numbers could not be read.

The final occupied territory was reported to us from Miskowice about 15 km from Chojna. There, two young were produced and banded. However, the rings of the adults could not be read. Because we collect molted feathers, we have genetic evidence about the origins of these individuals. In time we hope to analyze this information.

Three captive-bred falcons were put into a man-made eyrie on a smokestack in Plock. Several years ago, a live webcam was mounted at this nest site. Because the pair had no young this season, the young were placed into this nest to allow public viewing.

A competition was created to encourage people to report new breeding pairs of peregrines in Poland. The reward for someone discovering a successful pair of breeding falcons was Swarovski binoculars. In April 2016, the first three binoculars were given out to the lucky winners. Piotr Adamiok discovered the first nest in Barlinek in 2012; Łukasz Lawicki from Gryfina discovered the nest in Trzebież 2015; and Marek Wroński from Lip, found the nest at Barlinek 2 in 2015. All the detailed information about the project, courtesy of our Polish friends, is found on the website <http://peregrinus.pl/pl/aktualnosci>. This website is in Polish and partially in English.

In addition, we again fitted young falcons with satellite transmitters. We have had difficulties receiving the data signals during the last two years, but hope to resolve this technical glitch and monitor their movements.

The year Stephan Wunderlich, who manages our Facebook page, proposed to make a post to accompany a peregrine from egg to reintroduction. The video sequence was created and could be seen on our FB page. It was composed like a small documentary film. Bernd Reuter (Research center Hamburg) and Stephan spared neither time nor trouble arranging the digital network with the small sequences provided. Two famous companies are now aware of us. Through an association with these companies, we hope to create greater public awareness of our species conservation project.

Donations are always welcome, as financial support is necessary to sustain our efforts. In addition, working cooperatively with well-known companies could do much to strengthen our image with the general public.

After consultation with Prof. Saar, a female peregrine from the breeding station at Hamburg was gifted to a Polish breeder who contributes young to the release project. The falcon will renew and improve his bloodlines. In return he generously gave a female peregrine to the project.

We gratefully acknowledge the efforts of organizations and individuals who support the peregrine reintroduction project. As before, the project is financed by the Society for Wildlife, Stowarzyszenie Na Rzecz Dzikich Zwierząt "SOKÓŁ". For every falcon provided for release, the breeder receives 300.00 EUR as an administration fee. In addition, the station Hamburg received a grant of 5.000,00 € of the DFO, because of covering the maintenance costs.

My sincere thanks to Prof. Christian Saar and Bernd Reuter for breeding peregrines and rearing the young birds for reintroduction. They and the other breeders have my utmost respect for this invaluable work. Without dedicated falcon breeders, this project would not be possible.

All the cooperators from Germany and Poland, whether mentioned by name in this report or not, have earned our heartfelt thanks. Special recognition goes to Sławek Sielicki, who is our Polish contact person. He organizes the project there, and spends much time traveling in the name of peregrines. All of you, working together, have made this project a success.