

New York State Peregrine Falcons 2009



Niagara Falls young - photo by John Shiposki

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources
Endangered Species Unit**

2009

Peregrine Falcon Season Results

New York's peregrine falcon population continued its upward climb in 2009 with some record highs. Seventy-three territorial pairs were present, six more than last year's high, with 61 of these breeding and 55 successful. A total of 132 young were produced (137 hatched), an increase of three over last year's record high (Table 1, Figure 1). Forty-two of the territorial pairs were upstate (a record, and up 17% from last year); thirty-one territorial pairs were downstate (tied with last year's record) (Tables 2, 3 and Figure 2).

The downstate area had a record 67 young produced (up 12 % over 2008); the 65 young upstate was a slight decrease (6%) from last year. The downstate area also had a record 26 successful pairs (up 24 %), while the upstate area had its largest number of breeding pairs ever- 35 (up one over 2008). The statewide number of young per breeding pair was 2.2, while the number of young per successful pair was 2.4, nearly identical to last year. The nesting status was not determined at four sites statewide, two of which had pairs present, so these figures may be a bit low. Two additional sites with single birds also had insufficient time spent to determine status.

Comparing the number of territorial pairs and young produced by four different site types in New York in 2009 (Figures 3 and 4), cliff sites take the lead. In comparisons of productivity by site type, however (Figure 5), structure nest sites - whether buildings, bridges, or other structures (artificial nest towers or osprey nest platforms) - consistently produce more young per breeding pair.

With 2009's production of 137 young hatched and 132 fledged, at least 1581 young are known to have hatched and 1535 presumed fledged in New York State since 1983. Upstate pairs have contributed 726 nestlings and 714 fledglings, while the downstate population had 855 hatch and 821 fledge.

New York State participated for the third time in the USFWS post federal delisting monitoring program, which occurs triennially until 2015. New York has the largest number of randomly selected peregrine falcon nest sites in the East to monitor, with 19.

New Locations

The biggest highlight for 2009 was the large increase in new pairs – eleven reported, compared to just two in 2008. Upstate, there were three new pairs in the Buffalo area- two of which bred successfully; three in the Adirondacks, all successful; and one along the St. Lawrence River. Downstate, there were three new nest sites (all successful) in New York City, and one additional territorial pair in nearby Westchester County.

The three new sites in NYC are all unique and the first time ever that these types of nest sites are known to have been used recently in the state. The first to be confirmed was on an abandoned pier building slated for development; the second was on a residential high rise building; and the third was suspected to be inside an abandoned hangar at a major airport. None of these sites are really optimal for successful nesting, for a variety of reasons. Steps have already been taken at these locations to provide an alternate nest site or deter future nesting. It is unusual to find ourselves in the position of needing to relocate so many peregrine falcon nests, but in these situations it will be best for both the birds and people.

The nest box in Rochester on the Kodak headquarters had to be removed in August 2008 due to an unavoidable multi-year renovation project. A very popular nesting pair, watched globally via a four camera webcam, has been highly productive there since 1998. In the fall of 2008, two new alternate nest boxes were placed on buildings in the area. Unfortunately, last spring the long time mate of the resident female did not return, then a new mate was killed, and finally another new female and male attacked the resident female necessitating her rehabilitation. The original female was successfully released six weeks later about 40 miles away, and promptly returned to Rochester (as expected). Meanwhile, no confirmed nesting occurred by the new pair, although by late June they appeared to be using one of the nest boxes. We are hopeful that they will use this site in 2010. At last report, the original nesting female appears to have set up residence several miles away, and we are looking into the placement of another box for her in that area.

Fostering and Banding

A successful fostering occurred at one of the oldest and most productive nest sites in New York in recent times, the Throgs Neck Bridge, active since 1983. The lone chick at this site was found dead on the roadway soon after banding but before it was ready to fledge. It is believed to have been blown off the top of the bridge in some high winds. About 12 days later, a chick of about the same age, four and a half weeks old, that had fallen out of the new apartment building eyrie five days earlier (and was unable to be returned there), was placed at the Throgs Neck nest box first thing in the morning. The site was very carefully monitored due to the amount of time since the original chick's disappearance. The adult female was present, and by late afternoon both adults brought in food and the young was fed. The falcon fledged successfully.

A total of 60 young peregrine falcons were banded in 2009 in New York State. Forty-seven of these were banded downstate in the New York City area and Hudson River Valley by cooperator Chris Nadareski of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. An additional 13 young were banded by regional DEC staff upstate at nest sites in Albany, Syracuse, and Buffalo.

Sightings and Recoveries

We are fortunate to still be getting radio signals from one of the five Rochester young from the Kodak nest site in 2008, a female that had a 22 gram solar satellite PTT (platform transmitting terminal) attached via a backpack harness that summer. The travels of this bird are being posted online at the "Imprints" pages of the rfalconcam.com website. This bird was consistently reported and visually observed numerous times, including in Cape Cod during the fall of 2008 and that winter on Nantucket. For most of the summer and fall of 2009 and the first part of the winter 2009-2010, the bird has been along the northeastern shore of Lake Ontario.

A few selected interesting 2009 reports of banded birds include : a Baltimore, Maryland young female seen in NYC in January; a Wisconsin bird banded at the nest in 2007 found dead in Albany, NY in February; a 13 year old plus NYC female found dead in February in Atlantic City, NJ; a Syracuse young from 2006 nesting in Cleveland, Ohio; a female from Pittsburgh, PA and a male from Ontario pairing up in Rochester, NY; a Rochester 2006 bird nesting in Ogdensburg, NY; a NYC bird found dead its first fall in VA; and a male raised in 2007 in Buffalo now nesting in Ontario. Special thanks to all who had the patience and persistence to read these band numbers.



Niagara Falls young... with leftovers - photo by John Shiposki

A total of 24 peregrines were recovered in New York State during 2009. Seven were found dead, six were alive, rehabilitated and released, eight were alive and died or were euthanized, and three were alive and are still in rehab. The majority involved injuries due to trauma and probable collision with vehicles or other impact injuries. Carcasses are necropsied, when possible, by DEC's Wildlife Pathology Unit. Fourteen unhatched eggs were collected for analysis from eleven different sites.

Looking Ahead

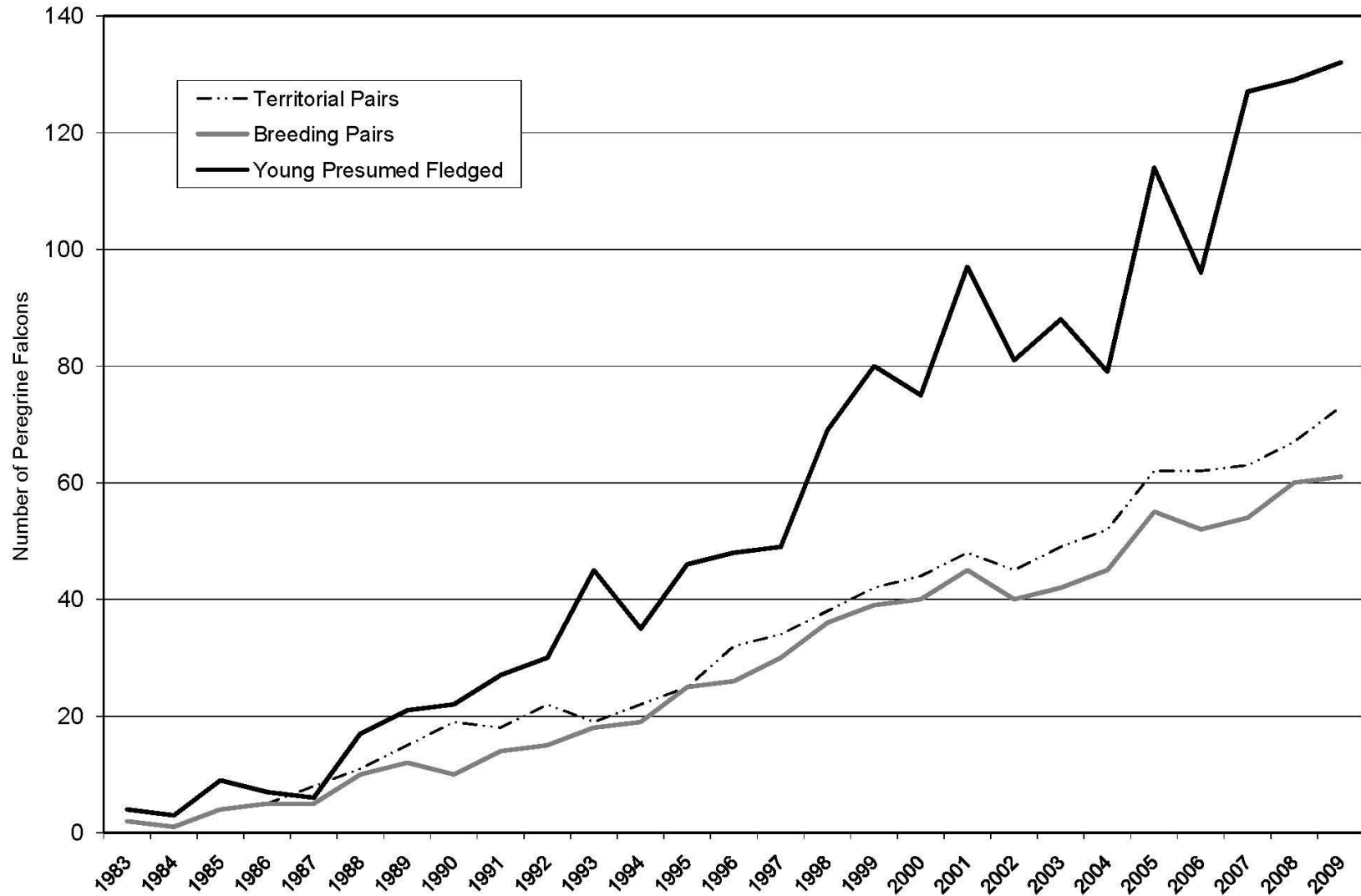
Visitors from Geneva, Switzerland and Barcelona, Spain were some of the officials who visited New York during 2009 to find out how we protect and manage our growing population. The falcons' use of new types of structures will present challenges in coming years as we learn how to accommodate humans and peregrine falcons in novel situations. Each year presents some surprises. One constant, thankfully, is the help and support of so many people, some of whom are in various agencies and bridge authorities, others building owners and volunteers. All remain vital to protection and management of this species. We appreciate the many individuals who care about this bird enough to assist us in various ways and help ensure its continued success and future in New York. Please refer to the Acknowledgments section at the end of the report for a list of many of those who helped.

Table 1. New York State Peregrine Falcon Breeding Summary: Statewide 1991-2009

NUMBER OF PAIRS	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of Territorial ¹ Pairs	18	22	19	22	25	32	34	38	42	44	48	45	49	52	62	62	63	67	73
No. of Breeding ² Pairs	14	15	18	19	25	26	30	36	39	40	45	40	42	45	55	52	54	60	61
No. of Successful ³ Pairs	11	13	17	18	19	24	25	31	37	33	41	34	35	37	46	45	48	50	55
No. of Young ⁴ Produced	27	30	45	35	46	48	49	69	80	75	96	81	88	79	114	96	127	129	132
Young/ Breeding Pair	1.9	2.0	2.5	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.8	2.1	1.9	2.3	2.2	2.2
Young/ Successful Pair	2.5	2.3	2.7	1.9	2.4	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.1	2.5	2.1	2.6	2.5	2.4

- 1 A territorial pair is defined by the presence of two potentially breeding birds within a suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season. In most cases, the pair exhibits courtship behavior and makes a scrape.
- 2 A breeding pair is defined by a pair of birds within a nesting territory where evidence indicates that eggs were laid (such as eggs, eggshell fragments, young, incubation or young-feeding behavior).
- 3 A successful pair is defined as one which produced one or more young that reached fledging age.
- 4 Young presumed fledged.

New York State Peregrine Falcon Breeding Summary 1983-2009



Data from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Endangered Species Unit

Chart prepared by Laura Sommers, Nongame Unit, 2/23/10

Figure 1

Table 2. Upstate1 New York Peregrine Falcon Breeding Summary: 1991-2009

NUMBER OF PAIRS	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of Territorial ² Pairs	8	10	9	10	10	15	15	16	20	22	25	22	26	26	33	34	35	36	42
No. of Breeding ³ Pairs	7	8	9	8	10	11	14	16	18	19	23	19	24	23	32	30	29	34	35
No. of Successful ⁴ Pairs	6	6	8	7	9	11	13	16	18	17	23	15	20	19	27	27	26	29	29
No. of Young ⁵ Produced	13	9	12	9	14	14	17	30	40	34	50	31	47	35	61	53	62	69	65
Young/ Breeding Pair	1.9	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.9	2.2	1.8	2.2	1.6	2.0	1.5	1.9	1.8	2.1	2.0	1.9
Young/ Successful Pair	2.2	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.9	2.2	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.4	1.8	2.3	2.0	2.4	2.4	2.2

¹ Upstate includes Albany and areas north and west of the Hudson Valley.

² A territorial pair is defined by the presence of two potentially breeding birds within a suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season.

³ A breeding pair is defined by a pair of birds within a nesting territory where evidence indicates that eggs were laid (such as eggs, eggshell fragments, young, incubation or young-feeding behavior).

⁴ A successful pair is defined as one which produced one or more young that reached fledgling age.

⁵ Young presumed fledged

⁶ From here on, also includes upstate urban nesting

Table 3. Downstate¹ New York Peregrine Falcon Breeding Summary: 1991-2009

NUMBER OF PAIRS	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of Territorial ² Pairs	10	12	10	12	15	17	19	22	22	22	23	23	23	26	29	28	28	31	31
No. of Breeding ³ Pairs	7	7	9	11	15	15	16	20	21	21	22	21	18	22	23	22	25	26	26
No. of Successful ⁴ Pairs	5	7	9	11	10	13	12	15	19	16	18	19	15	18	19	18	22	21	26
No. of Young ⁵ Produced	14	21	33	26	32	34	32	39	40	41	46	50	41	44	53	43	65	60	67
Young/ Breeding Pair	2.0	3.0	3.7	2.4	2.1	2.3	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.4	2.3	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.6	2.3	2.6
Young/ Successful Pair	2.8	3.0	3.7	2.4	3.2	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.1	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.4	2.8	2.4	2.9	2.9	2.6

¹ Downstate is defined as areas south of Albany including the Hudson Valley.

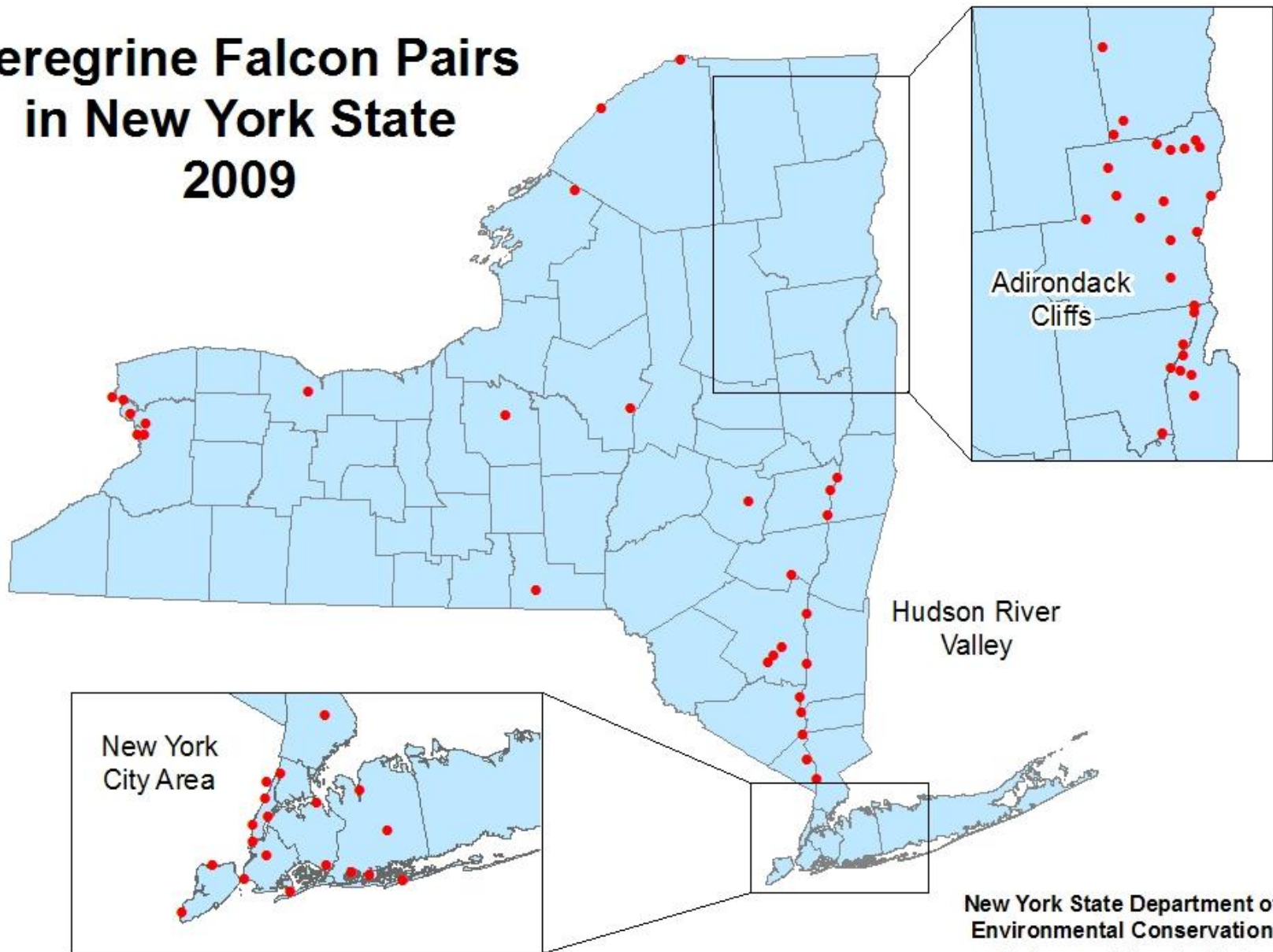
² A territorial pair is defined by the presence of two potentially breeding birds within a suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season.

³ A breeding pair is defined by a pair of birds within a nesting territory where evidence indicates that eggs were laid (such as eggs, eggshell fragments, young, incubation or young-feeding behavior).

⁴ A successful pair is defined as one which produced one or more young that reached fledging age.

⁵ Young presumed fledged.

Peregrine Falcon Pairs in New York State 2009



**New York State Department of
Environmental Conservation**

Endangered Species Unit

Map prepared by Laura Sommers,
Nongame Unit, 2/23/10

Figure 2

Peregrine Falcons in New York State 2009: Territorial Pairs by Site Type

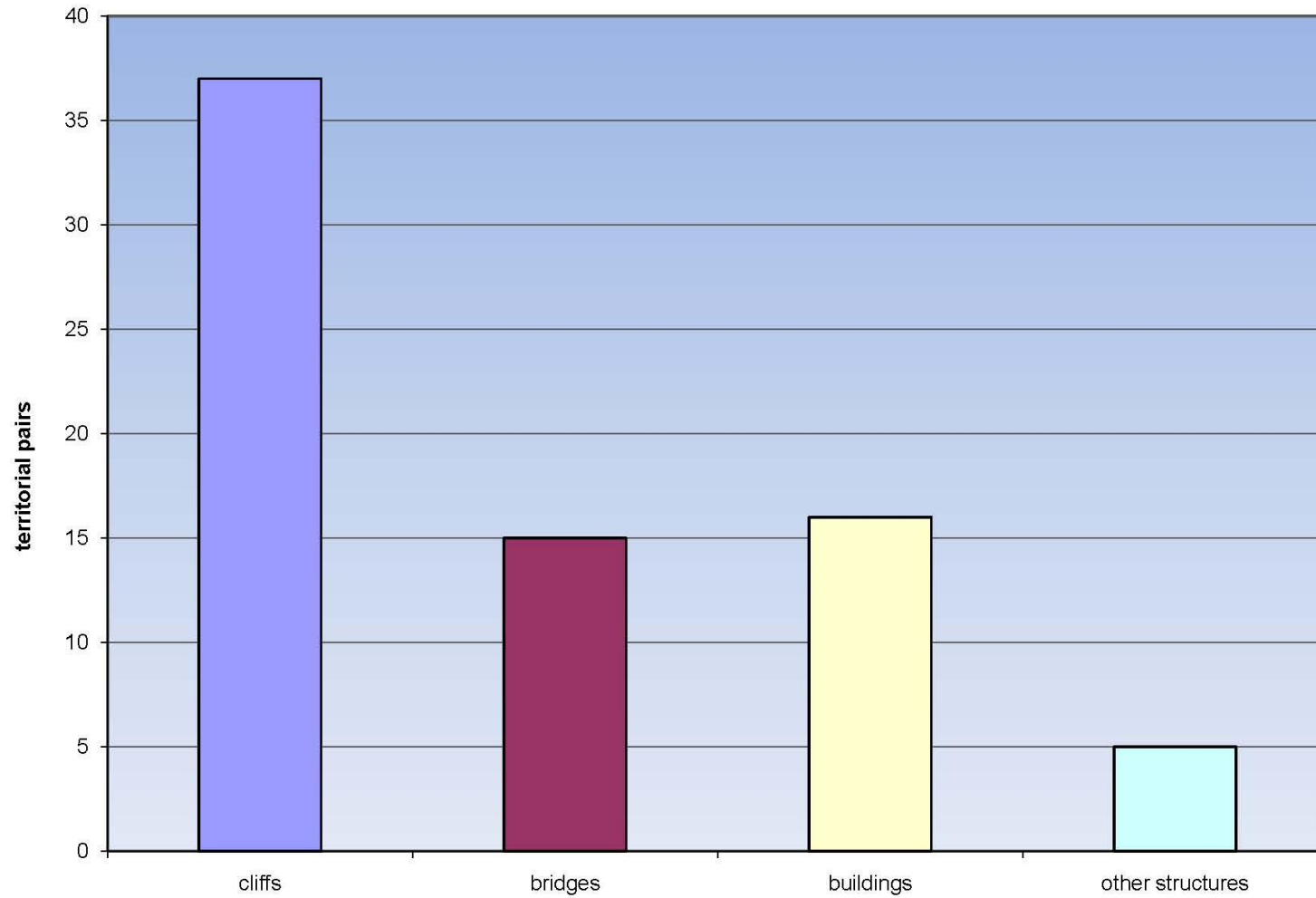


Figure 3

Chart prepared by Laura Sommers, Nongame Unit, 2/23/10

Peregrine Falcons in New York State 2009: Young Produced by Site Type

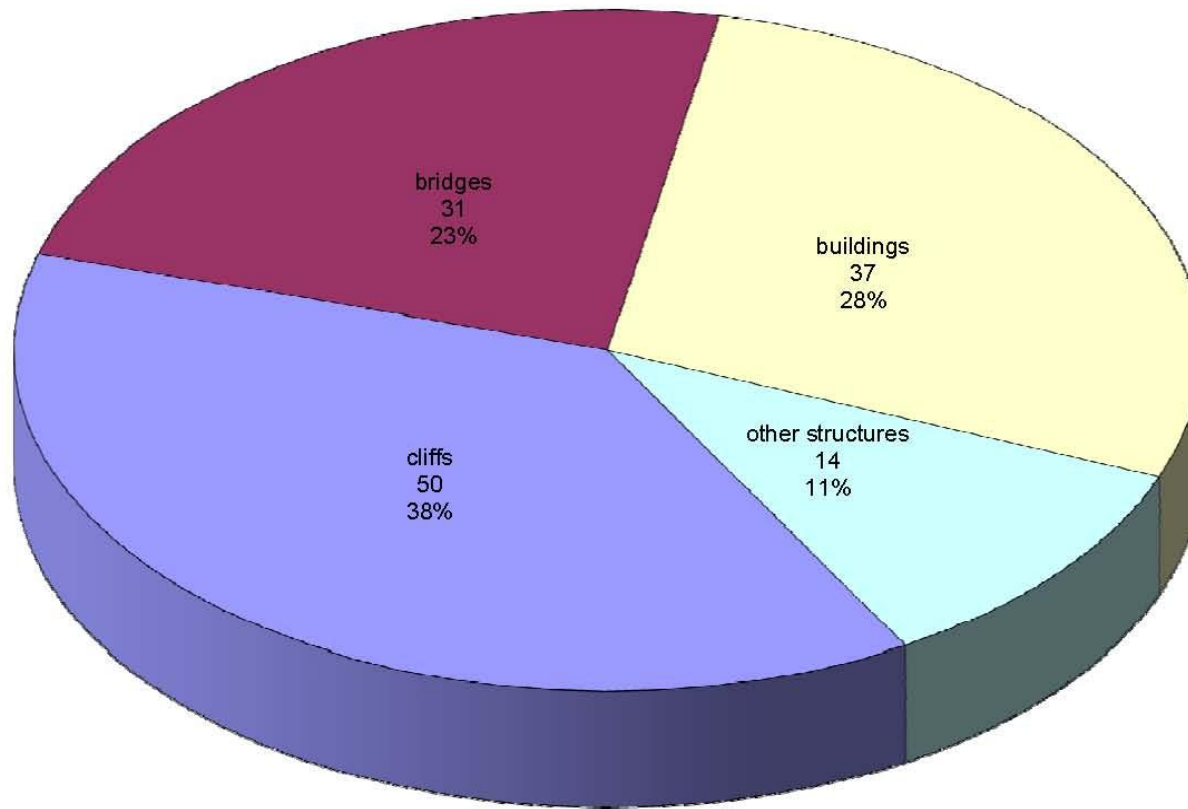


Figure 4

Chart Prepared by Laura Sommers, Nongame Unit, 2/23/10

Peregrine Falcons in New York State 2005 to 2009: Productivity by Site Type

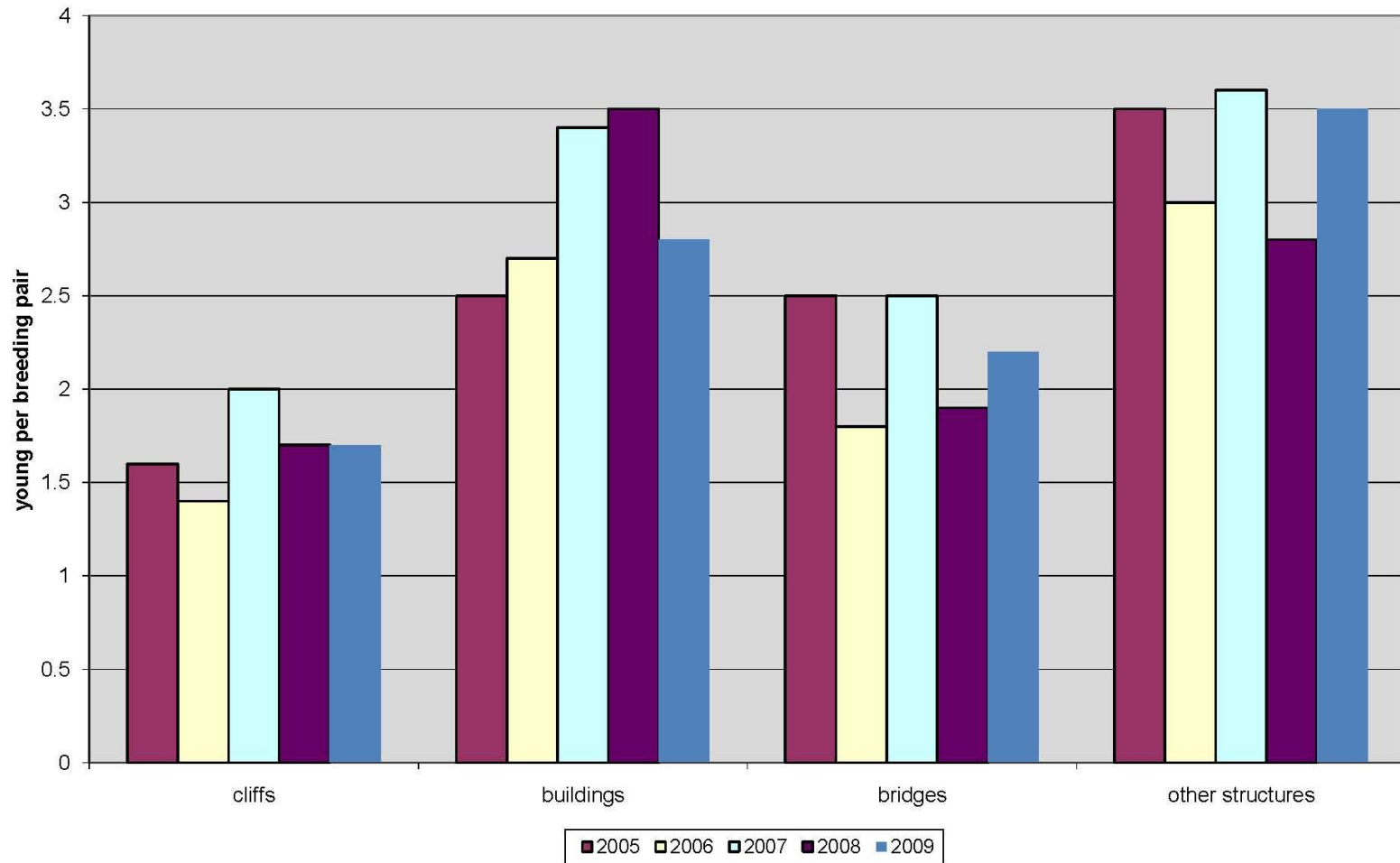


Figure 5

Chart Prepared by Laura Sommers, Nongame Unit, 2/23/10

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Long time resident female at Riverside Church, NYC; one of the most aggressive females encountered during bandings; raised five young each of the last two years despite scaffolding directly outside the eyrie
- photo by Barbara Saunders



Mike Allen, recent "retiree" with a very friendly Rochester young (that hopped on his arm during a release). Thanks for all your help with peregrines in central and western New York, and looking forward to more years of getting attacked by angry females! - photo by Thomas Hoehn / Kodak