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Lifelong Raptor Researcher

by Tom Meyer, President Cedar Grove Ornithological Research Station

After a long battle with cancer, Daniel D. Berger passed away at his home in South Pasadena, CA on December 27, 2016. Dan was 85 years old. Dan was a lifelong raptor researcher. He traveled the continent from the Dry Tortugas to the

artic learning everything he could about raptors.

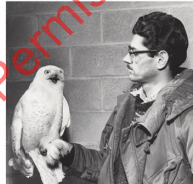
Dan was born in Milwaukee WI where as a teenager he joined the John Muir bird club. With a strong interest in falconry and birds of prey he and fellow bird club member Helmut Mueller took a trip to Cedar Grove WI where they had learned that the Milwaukee Public Museum ran a hawk trapping station. Finding the place abandoned the two young men took ownership. In 1950 Dan began his unprecedented run, trapping raptors at the Cedar Grove Ornithological Research

Station (CGORS) for 65 years. Over 43,000 hawks, falcon, eagles and owls have been trapped and banded at CGORS. Dan has only missed three fall hawk migration seasons since 1950.

While studying at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, Dan met another raptor enthusiast, Jack Kaspar. Jack joined the crew at Cedar Grove and continued until his death in 2015. In those early years it was Jack that had a car and was able to provide transportation between Madison and Cedar Grove.

Dan and Helmut did surveys on the Mississippi river for nesting peregrines. Surveys were suspended when no nesting pairs could be found. When peregrines returned to the cliffs along the Mississippi so did Dan. Until the age of 30 Dan was still involved banding cliff nesting peregrines on the Mississippi River with Bob Anderson.

Dan also worked for over a decade with Jerry Craig and the Colorado Division of Wildlife banding peregrine falcons on cliffs in the Rocky Mountains.



Through Joe Hickey at UW-Madison Dan was hired to do peregrine falcon surveys. Dan and a crew checked all known nesting sites east of the Mississippi and north into Canada and found no active nests.

It was through Helmut Mueller that Dan met Frederick and Frances Hamerstrom. Dan joined these pioneers in the field of raptor research on many different projects including northern harrier and snowy owl research.

During the 1950's and 60's Dan and Helmut were also banding the few osprey and bald eagles that could be found in north central Wisconsin.

Untold numbers of young aspiring raptor researchers were mentored by Dan. Many of our raptor researchers throughout the country today have at one time or another passed through Cedar Grove.

Dan's legacy will continue through his contributions to raptor research. He will be missed at Cedar Grove. We will miss his smile, his laughter and especially his stories.

Dan's Recognitions





Reminiscence of Dan Berger

By Jerry Craig

Many folks identify Dan Berger with the fall raptor migrations at Cedar Grove, Wisconsin where he ran a banding station most of his life. However he also contributed importantly to early knowledge of peregrine falcon population status when he and Chuck Sindelar inventoried known nest sites in the eastern United States in 1964. I first met Dan when he showed up the spring of 1974 to assist Jim Enderson and me with our preliminary peregrine survey of Colorado. We immediately hit it off and Dan became integral to our peregrine monitoring and recovery program through out the 1970's and 80's. Dan was my annual partner for fifteen years arriving every March and heading out around the end of July. During those years 'Mr. Berger' became a member of the Craig family. He shared in the raising of three daughters and their various pets including rats, gerbils and a family skunk. Regular attendance at dance recitals and birthday parties was expected. We made repeated visits to canyons, escarpments and gorges throughout the state. Many long sleep deprived hours were spent on the road often driving through the night to deliver wild eggs to The Peregrine Fund's Fort Collins facilities for incubation. The State's fostering program was intense and time consuming. It required hours of tedious observation of nesting pairs, hiking onto cliff tops, rappels into nest ledges, removing eggs, transferring them into portable incubators, and long drives to The Peregrine Fund. When captive hatched young were available, the sequence was reversed. There were some rappels we just didn't like. They were scary, so Dan and I would take turns, the second climber taking confidence from his partner. If I had made the first rappel to remove eggs, Dan made the next rappel to return chicks. The next year we reversed the order. Dan was an important contributor during a critical time when Colorado experimented with last ditch actions to procure and hatch thin-shelled eggs and foster captive nestlings back to the wild. I doubt that our efforts would have been as successful without Dan and they certainly would not have been as enjoyable.

Dan's legacy will continue through his contributions to raptor research. His smile, laughter, and especially his stories will be missed.

Partners in Falconry

by: David C. Freda

My memories of Dan Berger take me back to the early seventies. As falconer in Wisconsin, it was only a matter of time our paths would cross. Through falconer Dave Evans and bald eagle researcher Chuck Sindelar I was asked to participate at Cedar Grove in the fall and became actively involved.

Spring of 1972 I worked as a "gabbon" helping Chuck Sindelar band young bald eagles upon returning to Cedar Grove that year, Chuck had opportunity to tell Dan about an experience I will never forget and am fortunate to be alive today to tell the tale. Chuck Sindelar, Dave Evans and I were at Mann Lake in northern Wisconsin banding the young bald eaglets atop a 93' pine. When at the top, I grasped a dead branch

and fell to the ground, missing all branches as I came down. Breath knocked out of me, dead silence as Dave and Chuck ran up, they were astonished to see I was still alive. Chuck shared this story with Dan at which time Dan entertainingly coined me as "Free-fall Freda". The nick name stuck and I carry it with me today as well as all my annual Cedar Grove experiences.

I lost track of Dan through the years and unsuccessfully tried to locate him, researching his whereabouts only in Wisconsin. It was through his calling me we finally reconnected. Astonishingly, I discovered he had been only an hour away in South Pasadena during the years I had been Southern California. I was very fortunate to have had the opportunity to reconnect with him and spend quality time visiting. We recounted our days together while at Cedar Grove, laughed, looked at old photos, newspaper articles, and shared fond memories of friends, events and laughed some more.

Dan was very instrumental in encouraging me with my deep interest in natural history, birds of prey, my career as an artist, metalsmith and jeweler. I am grateful to have had an opportunity to express to him how his personal drive influenced me. He will be genuinely missed.

