

News Release

Young merlin is returned to its nest

By Elizabeth Tollefson on Thursday, June 30, 2005

A young Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) was returned to its nest by Natural Resources faculty, staff, and students on Tuesday after it had prematurely departed during last weeks high winds. Their effort was made possible by Kirby Nielsen of Roers Construction and a boom lift currently being used to replace windows in McCall Hall. Tom Feiro coordinated the effort. The nest is located at the top of a spruce tree on the UMC Mall directly across from Selvig Hall.

Merlins are the second smallest of North America's five falcon species. They prey principally on birds, capturing them during a high-speed aerial chase. They are fast fliers and generally inhabit open landscapes. Merlins often nest on the abandoned or old nests of other species such as crows, as in this case, or magpies. They typically lay 4-5 eggs that usually are incubated by the female for 30 days. The male provides much of the food for the female throughout courtship and incubation. Chicks remain in the nest for 30-35 days before fledging and beginning to forage on their own. These nestlings appear to have a week to 10 days before they will be ready for their first flight.

The adult Merlins are easily seen on the campus mall, either with or without binoculars. An ideal location for viewing would be sitting near the Gazebo looking south toward the nest. Watch for a fast-flying bird that is 50% larger than a robin and has pointed wings with a rapid wingbeat. Their call is a loud, repeated KEE KEE KEE KEEE.



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2900 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716
800-862-6466 | 218-281-6510 | umcinfo@umn.edu

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