

Peregrine falcons draw bird watchers to Mississippi River bluff area near Alton

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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GODFREY - Those driving up and down the Great River Road to Alton or back from Grafton will notice photographers with long lenses camped across the road from the legendary Blue Pool area.

The photographers have their cameras pointed to the sky toward the bluffs these days and say they are photographing famed peregrine falcons, also known as the duck hawk in North America.

The peregrine falcons are described as the fastest member of the animal kingdom, and known for their speed, often reaching more than 200 mph during their high-speed dive they execute during hunting.

In May, the peregrine falcons will be building nests likely in the same area for mating purposes.

Paul Moffett of Florissant, Mo., and **Martin Rothe** of Collinsville, nestled across the road from the Blue Pool area on Thursday morning with their cameras and magnifying glasses observing multiple peregrine falcons in a specific area on the bluffs.

Both retirees are avid bird watchers, were trying to get the best possible view for photographs of the beautiful bird.

“We like to come here a lot to watch the peregrine falcons,” Moffett said.

Rothe said for him bird watching and observing these precious birds is “one of the joys of my life.”

Rothe and Moffett both spend considerable time observing different species of birds along the bluffs and also enjoy going to the Columbia, Mo. river bottoms, among many other regional areas. Moffett’s constant routine consists of exercising, taking photographs and bird watching. Rothe retired from carpentry and architectural work, while Moffett was a long-time SSM employee before he retired last year.

Moffett and Rothe described the peregrine falcon as “very athletic,” with its ability to dive at an astonishing 200-plus mph. The peregrine falcons rely primarily on smaller bird prey, but also eat small mammals and insects.

“The peregrine falcon is the most amazing bird other than eagles and are most aggressive,” Rothe said.

“The peregrines can catch their prey in mid-air and use the act of surprise to obtain many of their prey,” he said. “Imagine hitting something going 200 miles per hour.”

Moffett studied zoology and ornithology in college and said his love of birds never left him.

Moffett said he and Rothe are good friends and both love and thrive on their continual trips bird watching. Both men said they love the particular area along the Mississippi River bluffs and said it is second to none to see some of the best in observing birds.





