

PRESSRELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Zoo To Release Peregrine Falcon

Michigan City, IN (August 26, 2003) – Lane Theriac, director of the Washington Park Zoo, announced that the Zoo will release a juvenile peregrine falcon Thursday, August 28, at 3 p.m. in hopes that it will take up residence high over the City on the side of the NIPSCO stack overlooking the lake.

“The Zoo got involved with the youngster when Dr. Larry Reed DVM was looking for a suitable way to release the young bird that had been in his care through the IN DNR. We contacted John Castrale, wildlife biologist for the Division of Fish and Wildlife at the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and offered to give the bird space to build up her wings before being released,” said Director Theriac. “NIPSCO is allowing us to use a DNR nest box on top of one of their buildings at the generating station for the release. The falcon’s parents are still in the area, and we are hoping they will help care for her.”

Peregrine falcons are from the family Falconidae which is divided into several subfamilies (forest falcons, pygmy falcons [sometimes called falconets], caracaras and falcons). Falconinae is comprised of falcons, gyrfalcons and kestrels, all in the genus *Falco* which contains 39 species. The Medieval English translation of the Latin *falco peregrinus* is "pilgrim falcon." The bird was named the Pilgrim Falcon by medieval falconers because the young peregrines were caught during migration (on "pilgrimage") from the nesting place rather than taking them from the nest.

Peregrines prefer semi-forested areas and were once found in nearly all climate zones, even occasionally utilizing tundra and deserts. The use of the pesticide DDT was the primary reason their populations became greatly reduced and they became highly endangered. Their range is once again increasing, with new nest sites being reported every year.

Falcons average 19 inches in length while kestrels average 13 inches; both have wingspans of about 40 inches. Falcon wings are long and pointed with a swept-back look, a configuration allowing great speed.

The swept-back wings are the most striking feature of a flying falcon, Theriac said. Falcons are known for their high speed flight, and the Peregrine is thought to be the fastest bird, accurately clocked at 90 meters per second.

Larry Nemcek, NIPSCO’s plant manager said, “We really enjoy working with the zoo on this type of effort to maintain some harmony between industry and the environment. The nest on the stack is

currently home to a pair of adult falcons who are the parents of this chick. She was banded by the DNR at the NIPSCO nest site in May 2003, along with 4 other new hatchlings. No one is sure why this youngster was having some problems, but the zoo's facilities really came to the rescue." continued Nemcek.

Theriac said, "We think she might have bruised her wing on a building when she was learning to fly, but we'll probably never really know what happened to her."

A young male peregrine was also brought to the Zoo through the DNR. "This young guy had his flight feathers singed," said Director Theriac, "and can not be released until new feathers grow in. He will be moving to a rehabilitation facility this Fall to practice his hunting skills before he is released."

The release of the young falcon will take place between 2 and 4pm on Tuesday, August 26, 2003. The public is invited to bring their binoculars to Washington Park and Washington Park Zoo to watch the release.

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