



News Release
January 27, 2011

Marvin Jenkins
INDOT, Seymour District
Public Information Officer
912-524-3733
mjenkins2@indot.in.gov

Andrea Clifford
KYTC District 5
502.210.5403
502.262.0777 (cell)
andrea.clifford@ky.gov

FALCON NESTING BOX TEMPORARILY RELOCATED DURING BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

Louisville, Ky. (January 27, 2011) – A Peregrine falcon nesting box, located on a pier of the Milton-Madison Bridge, was relocated today to protect the birds during construction of the new US 421 bridge connecting Milton, Ky., and Madison, Ind.

Officials from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) removed the nesting box from the ledge of a pier on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River. The box, used by falcons during the February–June nesting season, has been temporarily relocated to the first bridge pier in the water on the Indiana side of the river. The nest’s new pier location – referred to as “pier five” – will not be impacted by construction during the 2011 nesting season.



“We want to encourage nesting in a place that’s safe for them and temporarily out of the way of construction,” said Kate Heyden, avian biologist with KDFWR. Netting will be placed at the nest’s original site to discourage the falcons from returning there.



Falcons have nested on the Milton-Madison Bridge since 2002. Peregrine falcons are no longer on the endangered species list, but are still federally protected; it is illegal to harm or destroy a falcon or its nest.

“People sometimes wonder why we’re making such a fuss over this one nesting pair,” said Heyden. “But peregrine falcons are rare in Kentucky; there are only 13 known nesting pairs statewide.”

Peregrine falcons are strong hunters, diving at speeds of up to 200 miles per hour to prey on other birds in mid-flight.

“They do a service for us by helping to control pest species, like pigeons and starlings,” Heyden explained.

KDFWR will monitor the falcons closely during the nesting period. Construction workers will be encouraged to avoid working within 300 feet of the nest which the falcons have been known to aggressively protect.



“The birds – which pair for life – begin courting in February. By June the little ones learn to fly and leave the nest; but the adults will sleep in the box, off and on, year-round,” said Heyden.

The nesting box eventually will be moved again. Pier five – the only pier not being reused as part of the bridge project – will be removed in mid-2012.



“When the time comes, we will coordinate with the contractor, Walsh Construction Company, to determine a new permanent home for the nesting box on the new bridge,” added Heyden.

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) committed to relocating the nesting box as part of the project’s environmental process.

“INDOT and KYTC recognize that peregrine falcons are one of those unique and rare resources worthy of protection,” said Kevin Hetrick, INDOT project manager. “We will do our best to protect the falcons as we move forward with this project.”

The Milton-Madison Bridge Project is a bi-state effort between INDOT and KYTC. The new bridge is expected to open to traffic by September 15, 2012. For more information, visit www.MiltonMadisonBridge.com.

-###-