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VERMONT BALD EAGLE RESTORATION EFFORTS BEGIN SECOND SEASON

ADDISON, VT - The second season of Vermont's Bald Eagle Restoration Initiative officially began when six young bald eagles took up residency in their new home at the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area in Addison. The seven-week old eaglets are part of a hacking project to restore nesting bald eagles to the Lake Champlain basin of Vermont.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists removed the young eagles from wild eagle nests in Maryland. The birds will spend the next several weeks in a hack box, a semi-open enclosure built on a platform 20 feet high and designed to simulate natural nesting conditions.

Volunteers will monitor and feed the eaglets, keeping human contact to a minimum so the birds will retain their natural fears and instincts. Once the eagles are ready to fly, the hack box doors will be opened, freeing the eagles to learn to fly and hunt food on their own. It is hoped the eagles will return to the Lake Champlain basin to nest once they are old enough to breed, or in about four to six years.

"Last year we successfully raised and released eight eaglets," said Margaret Fowle, National Wildlife Federation biologist and project partner. "This year we're increasing our efforts. In addition to these six, we hope to get at least eight more eaglets from Maine and Massachusetts in June."

The newly arrived eaglets can be viewed on the internet through the project's website, www.cvps.com/eagles. The site includes two live webcams, information about bald eagles and the Vermont Bald Eagle Restoration Initiative, and interactive sections designed for teachers and students. New this year are profiles on many of the key people involved in the project and Eagle Challenges, informative, interactive sections that feature experiments, activities and facts about eagles.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is coordinating this bald eagle restoration effort in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Federation, Outreach for Earth Stewardship, and Central Vermont Public Service.