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#### BANDED BALD EAGLE FOUND NEAR MOORE RESERVOIR

Two local residents found a downed, banded bald eagle on Christmas morning in the woods near Moore Reservoir in Waterford, Vermont. The band identified the young female eagle as one of eight eagles reared and released this summer from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area in Addison as part of the Vermont Bald Eagle Restoration Initiative.

The eagle was transported to the St. Johnsbury Animal Hospital and examined by Dr. Robert Hoppe. The eagle died the following day while being transported to Tufts Wildlife Clinic in Massachusetts.

Preliminary examination of the eagle by Dr. Mark Pokras from Tufts found no obvious trauma, such as gunshot wounds or broken bones, and stomach contents were not suspicious. Results from blood and tissue samples are still pending.

"The bird was very weak--it flopped a few times and then fell over," said Russell Gray, who along with his wife, Marsha, found the eagle. "At first I thought it was a turkey vulture but when I got closer I could tell it was an eagle and then I saw the leg band."

This was the first confirmed sighting of the eagle since late August.

"It is disappointing news, but not totally unexpected," said Craig McLaughlin, Wildlife Director for the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. "Over 50 percent of young eagles die during their first year of life. However, once the eagles become adults in about five years, their survival is closer to 90 percent."

Eagles die from many causes including collisions with power lines and with cars or trains while they scavenge near roadways and railroad tracks, poisoning, gunshot and electrocution.

Vermont's Bald Eagle Restoration Initiative is a project to restore a nesting bald eagle population to the Lake Champlain basin of Vermont. For three years, six to nine eaglets will be raised with little human contact, then released when they learn to fly and hunt food successfully on their own. It is hoped the eagles will return to the Lake Champlain basin to nest once they are old enough to breed in about four to six years.

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

"Once the birds are released to the wild it's a challenge to track them," explained Eveleen Cecchini, director of Outreach for Earth Stewardship. "We had reported sightings of eagles around the Dead Creek area but confirmation through leg band identification was difficult. As far as we know, this was the first one found in poor health."