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## DEAD CREEK'S BALD EAGLES TAKE THEIR FIRST FLIGHT

ADDISON, VT - The doors are off and the eagles are flying.

Three young bald eagles took to the air early Thursday morning when the doors to their manmade hack boxes at the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area were removed. Three other eagles ventured out of the boxes to the front deck but, as of mid-morning, had not tried their wings.

"We removed the doors around 3:00 a.m.," said Amy Alfieri of Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. "The first bird fledged at 5:30 a.m., the second at 6:15 a.m. and the third about fifteen minutes later. It was very exciting."

The eagles didn't venture far, choosing to perch in nearby pine trees.

"It looked like the first eagle fledged by mistake," said Steve Costello of Central Vermont Public Service. "When it came out of the box it tried to land on the deck where another eagle was already perched, forcing it to make a mid-course adjustment and continue flying. Last year when the birds flew it looked like they had been doing it forever. This year they look like they needed training wheels."

The six birds released are part of Vermont's Bald Eagle Restoration Initiative, a project to help restore a breeding population of bald eagles in Vermont. The young eagles were captured from nests in Maryland and placed in the hack boxes earlier in May. This is the second year of the three-year project.

"We released the birds at an earlier age than last year," said Margaret Fowle of National Wildlife Federation. "That's why their first flights are a little clumsy. We want them to learn they can fly off but come back to the hack box for food."

Volunteers will continue to feed the eagles and monitor their activity from a blind.

"It was a perfect day for the release," said Eveleen Cecchini of Outreach for Earth Stewardship. The slight breeze gets under their wings and encourages them to lift off. It really is fun to watch. They are so clueless at first and then instinct kicks in."

Project partners expect to receive more young eaglets from Massachusetts, New York and Maine later in June. The partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, National Wildlife Federation, Outreach for Earth Stewardship, Central Vermont Public Service, and Senator Jim Jeffords.

To learn more about the project or bald eagles in general, or to keep tabs on the eagles via the eagle webcam, check out the project's website: [www.cvps.com/eagles](http://www.cvps.com/eagles).

