

July 7, 2004

Bald eaglets soar at Dead Creek

ADDISON, Vt. – The last eagle raised by the Vermont Bald Eagle Restoration Initiative fledged from its hack box at Dead Creek Tuesday morning, July 6, taking its first flight between sunrise and 7 a.m.

When their hack boxes were opened last Friday just before dawn, two of the six remaining eaglets flew almost immediately. A third bird in the same box fledged Saturday, along with two others in the neighboring box. Two other birds were released in June.

Hack boxes look like a combination of a tree house and a cage, and allow eaglets to be protected and fed while exposing them to the outdoors before their release.

All eight birds have been seen around the hack box area at Dead Creek ever since they've been freed. They are flying, perching and appear to be doing some hunting or scavenging, though they've also been coming back to the hack boxes for the free food.

Volunteers will continue to monitor the birds, and food will be provided as long as they continue to take it, but they are not relying on that solely.

They are expected to fly south for the winter, but bald eagles usually return to their place of origin when they are sexually mature, at age 4 to 6.

Two of the birds were captured from nests in Maryland, while three came from nests in Maine. The others were hatched in captivity in Massachusetts.

“All of the birds appear healthy and are doing well,” OFES Director Eveleen Cecchini said Wednesday.

This is the first year of the project, which is planned to last at least two more years. In addition to raising and releasing bald eagles, with a goal of eventually removing the bald eagle from the endangered species list, the project is focused on education. To learn more about the project, bald eagles and raptors, check out the project website, www.cvps.com/eagles.

The Vermont Bald Eagle Restoration Initiative is a collaborative effort to restore a breeding bald eagle population to Vermont, the only state in the continental United States that lacks breeding eagles. The partnership includes Outreach for Earth Stewardship, the National Wildlife Federation, Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Central Vermont Public Service. Major funding for the project was obtained through the efforts of Sen. James Jeffords.

The hack boxes were built by volunteers last spring atop a platform built on six recycled utility poles. Since their arrival, the birds have been protected around the clock by dozens of volunteers.

“I’ve never seen a volunteer project like this before,” CVPS spokesman Steve Costello said. “All five partners, the senators’ staff and the myriad volunteers have worked remarkably well together, and we now have eight eaglets flying around Addison as evidence of that spirit of cooperation.”