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MORE YOUNG EAGLES ARRIVE AT DEAD CREEK WMA

ADDISON, VT - There is no vacancy at the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area in Addison. But that's a good thing.

Six young bald eagles settled into the two remaining hack boxes on June 8 and 9, sharing the man-made nesting site with two young eagles from Maryland that moved in earlier in May. The new arrivals will stay in these semi-open enclosures until they are ready to fly later this summer.

Three of the eaglets came from captive breeding eagles belonging to Tom Ricardi, a bird rehabilitator in Massachusetts. The one female and two males are siblings and eight weeks old.

"I began rehabilitating birds in 1965 and I've been breeding eagles since 1970," explained Ricardi. "So far, I've raised 33 eaglets, but these are my first triplets."

The other three eaglets came from wild bald eagles nesting in Maine. The birds, also eight weeks old, were captured from nests on Brewer Lake in Orrington, Androscoggin River in Auburn, and Kennebec River in Benton. One eaglet was removed and its sibling was left in each of the donor nests.

The eaglets will spend the next month or so viewing their surroundings from the barred front doors of the hack box. Volunteer caretakers provide them fish as food, using specially designed feeding chutes to minimize human contact.

Meanwhile, the first two eagles from Maryland are almost ready to "fly the coop."

"The first pair of eagles are getting restless," stated Eveleen Cecchini, director of Outreach for Earth Stewardship and eagle-care manager for the project. "There's been lots of wing flapping, but we are waiting a few days to open the hack box front door. We want the new arrivals to settle in and give the smaller of the two older eagles more time to mature."

Vermont is the only state in the continental United States that does not have bald eagles nesting within its borders. 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, Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS), and others. Funding for the new project was provided through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Senator Jim Jeffords' request.

The project has sparked community support and involvement. Volunteers built the hack box. Many local businesses also have donated supplies, including a camper, tents and free DSL connection for a webcam. Over 35 trained volunteers are monitoring and caring for the young eagles.

"I spend about three hours at the hack box site every Monday afternoon," explained Larry Rogers, a volunteer caretaker from Shoreham. "It's a neat thing to do."

Central Vermont Public Service is hosting an eagle web site that features a live-eagle cam in the hack boxes. The web address is www.cvps.com/eagles.