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AVIAN HAVEN Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center



*presents
the story
of*

The Kenduskeag Avenue Eagles

Admitted
May 11 and 12, 2014

Released
June 3, 2014
and
September 5, 2014

Photos are by Glori Berry
unless otherwise credited.

Late on the morning of May 11, we received a call from Game Warden Jim Fahey. He had just retrieved an adult Bald Eagle from a sidewalk at the intersection of Kenduskeag Avenue and Division Street in Bangor. The bird had no obvious injuries, but seemed clumsy and disoriented, toppling over when trying to stand. She did not resist capture.



These photos by Judy Harrison illustrated a [Bangor Daily News report](#) of the bird's plight and rescue by Warden Fahey.

Marc met Jim in Dixmont, and the bird arrived here within an hour of her capture. We found no wounds or fractures. A quick x-ray looked normal, and basic bloodwork looked good except for an elevated blood lead level. She was not acting like a lead-poisoned bird, though. As soon as we finished our intake work, we put her on a cushioned bed, where she soon appeared to be unconscious.



On the assumption that she had ingested some unknown toxin, we administered a charcoal slurry to absorb it. We repeated the charcoal that evening. When we went to bed, she was still lying down, unmoving, with closed eyes.

From her bands, this lady was identified as a bird banded as a nestling in Winslow in June of 2008. She had been the resident female at a nest near the Kenduskeag Avenue area where she'd been rescued.

What's that you say? An eagle nest in downtown Bangor?

Sidebar: The Kenduskeag Avenue Eagle Nest



In the summer of 2011, [Sharon Fiedler](#) began photographing a pair of eagles in her Kenduskeag Avenue neighborhood. Sharon saw them often, and took hundreds of photos of them over the next several years.



Photos by Sharon Fiedler

The eagles became part of the community. Area residents kept an eye on them, swapping daily accounts of their activities with one another. In 2012, the eagle pair built a nest in that neighborhood, but it was not successful.

*In February and March of 2013,
Sharon's camera caught the birds
mating, building a nest, and
incubating eggs in that nest!*

Photos by Sharon Fiedler





The 2013 nest produced two eaglets. One fledged prematurely; after spending several July days on the ground in Bangor's busy downtown, the youngster was brought to Avian Haven to finish growing up in a safer setting.



We released the bird in September of that year.



Photos by Sharon Fiedler



The second youngster fledged without becoming a downtown public presence; Sharon photographed her in August 2013 - well above the city streets!

We felt that we already knew the family when "Bangor Mom" arrived here on May 11 of 2014.

But right before we closed up shop for the day on May 11, Warden Fahey called with some terrible news. Horrified Kenduskeag Avenue neighborhood residents had just seen a second eagle flying erratically and unable to maintain a perch on a tree branch. The bird fell onto power lines and was electrocuted. Jim recovered the body and took it to a storage facility at Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW). The dead male was the mate of the bird we'd admitted earlier that day, and the father of the youngster we'd raised in the summer of 2013.



Photo by Sharon Fiedler
(June 2013)

Diane called Charlie Todd at home as soon as she got off the phone with Jim. Though Charlie had recently stepped into a new position as MDIFW's Endangered Species Biologist, his career-long work to restore Maine's Bald Eagles had earned him a national [Recovery Champion](#) award in 2009. No one knew more about Maine's eagles and their nests than Charlie!



The Kenduskeag Avenue nest was about 90 feet up in a huge white pine tree. No aerial surveys of eagle nests had been done that spring, so not even Charlie could say whether there were currently eaglets in the nest -- but if so, without either parent, they would not survive. For starters, Charlie decided to visit the neighborhood early the next morning and listen for the begging calls of eaglets. If a rescue attempt was in order, it would require someone with tree-climbing equipment and skills, and ideally with raptor handling experience. We knew of very few people who were suited for the job, but were hopeful that one in particular might be available.

Around 6 a.m. on the morning of the 12th, when Diane checked on Bangor Mom, the bird was awake and holding her head up.



By noon, she was standing.



Meanwhile back on Kenduskeag Avenue, Charlie had heard the calls of an eaglet, and had given the go-ahead to implement the rescue plan.¹⁰

The key individual in that plan would be [Brent Bibles](#), currently a Unity College Biology Professor, and formerly a raptor biologist with the Colorado Dept. of Wildlife. In that capacity, he'd made hundreds of climbs to band raptors in their nests. When Marc called him that morning, he had no class obligations and was able to excuse himself from a meeting. Brent gathered his gear; Marc picked him up at the college, and they headed for Bangor. They were met at the scene by MDIFW biologists Brad Allen and Erynn Call, who would assist with the ropes during Brent's climb.



Photos by Sharon Fiedler

It was a long, slow, careful climb to the high nest. Brent's expertise and skill were evident to the onlookers.



Left and Middle Photos by Sharon Fiedler

Photo by Aislinn Sarnacki

Finally Brent called down the news everyone had waited for:
There were two chicks, and they were both alive!



Photos by Sharon Fiedler



Biologist Brad Allen and Warden Jim Fahey tend Brent's ropes.

Brent gathered the chicks into a canvas bag, and lowered precious cargo to Marc's waiting hands. Marc and Brad unpacked the birds.



Photos by Aislinn Sarnacki



Photos by
Aislinn Sarnacki



Marc gave the two eaglets electrolyte-containing fluids. Then he placed them in a soft-sided travel crate, and zipped the netted door into place. As soon as Brent had safely descended and gathered up his gear, the young birds began their car ride to Avian Haven.

On arrival here, they settled into a temporary nest.



[This short video](#)
lets you hear
them vocalizing!





Along with their weights (850 and 900 grams, or roughly 2 pounds each), these photos taken of their developing wings allowed Charlie to judge their age at approximately 3 weeks.



On May 13, we housed the eagles in a large crate snuggled up against the opening into their mother's hospital cage. For about another three weeks, they would be within the time window for imprinting. We wanted to make sure they had visual access to an adult eagle for the remainder of that period, and planned ways to minimize human exposure and handling. Fortunately, the birds were already old enough to eat on their own, so we did not have to hand-feed them.

That afternoon, Bangor Mom stood close to the crate and stared into it, but she did not go inside. The following day, she began to challenge the hospital cage; she needed to go to an outdoor habitat that was quiet, sheltered, and large enough to accommodate both her and the eaglets.

Ideal housing was available in an eagle apartment recently vacated by the death three weeks earlier of our beloved resident, [Bart](#), who had been known in his prime as the Maine State Eagle.



The habitat we'd called "Bart's Place" for many years was still as Bart had left it on April 21. We thought he would have approved of having a displaced eagle family move in, and in short order had set up a platform for a nest. Bart's perches were already well placed for a recovering adult.



We moved Bangor Mom and her eaglets into Bart's Place on May 14. She paid no attention to them at all, but stayed on a perch across the habitat, staring out a window. At the end of the day, we left her outside, but brought the youngsters back indoors for overnight.

May 14, cont'd:



We had weighed the eaglets on their way outside. At 1.26 and 1.30 kg, they both had gained about 400 grams in two days!



For the next two days, the pattern of the 14th continued. Mom stayed across the habitat from the eaglets during the day, and we brought them in at night. Concerned that she was not close enough for them to get good looks at her, we decided to provide another model for imprinting.

An adult male eagle had been admitted from South Addison a week earlier, emaciated and debilitated. We'd built his strength up to a point where he could be housed in the large hospital cage recently vacated by Bangor Mom. Whenever the youngsters were indoors (for overnights or on particularly chilly days) their crate was again set up adjacent to the door of that cage, with the adult only 2-3 feet away from them. We hooked up a small video camera that fed into a laptop; we could thereby monitor them without them being able to see us.



On May 17 they weighed 1.47 and 1.57 kg.



The photo to the right shows them in their outdoor nest (there are heating pads underneath them).

We'd installed a video camera in the habitat so that we could monitor them without going into the building. As [this video](#) from May 18 shows, in between meals, they were often loafing and dozing.



May 18 was the day we first found cast pellets -- regurgitations of undigestible parts of food such as fur and bones.



On May 19, their weights were up to 1.79 and 1.81 kg. They were so close in weight now that we were not sure we could tell them apart by size alone - so we applied green nail polish to the talons of one of them.



Marc covered himself with a sheet when delivering food or changing bedding. Glori was similarly draped when she took photos.



May 19: Bangor Mom has continued to ignore her kids. She's seemed out of sorts, and we wonder whether there is a residual effect of whatever toxin she'd ingested. We've also asked several rehab colleagues if they'd ever admitted a parent bird along with offspring. Those instances were rare, but with the exception of a single situation (in which an owl and her chicks were brought still contained in their original nest cavity), the adult had never tended the youngsters.

Perhaps a rehab hospital environment is simply too different from the original one for parenting behavior to re-emerge.

Bangor Mom's blood lead level had dropped below a level of concern, but she was still not eating well. We had been hand-feeding her almost daily for the last few days, and would continue doing so for a bit longer.



On May 22, we opened up the doors between Bart's Place and the main part of the eagle habitat. She soon left the area that hosted the nest.



May 23 (Indoors)



Their weights are 2.4 and 2.6 kg. ²⁷

May 25: We left them in Bart's Place overnight for the first time. These photos were taken on the next morning, May 26.



May 26: Bangor Mom is in the main cage, flying, eating well, and finally acting like a normal eagle.



May 27: Meanwhile, in Bart's Place, the eaglets are doing well and continuing to gain weight (they are up to 2.8 and 3.2 kg).



Their primary flight feathers are emerging! Charlie visited on May 29; on the basis of feather development, he judged them to be about 5 weeks old. The difference in weight was now fairly consistent - Charlie believed we had a male and a female. The next day, May 30, their weights were 3.5 and 4.1 kg.

June 2: They were losing their gray nestling down; the dark feathers of first-year eagles were becoming more prominent.



June 2 in the Flyway:
Bangor Mom was restless
and ready for release -
tomorrow would be the day!

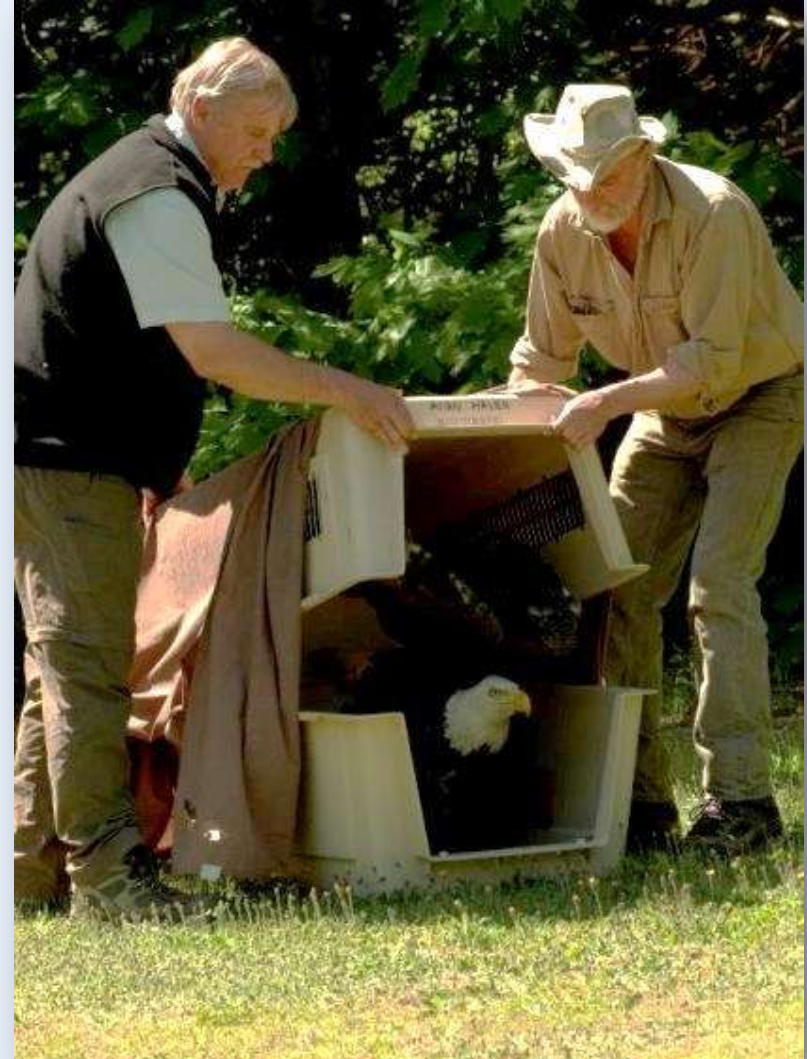




To capture eagles in the flyway, a mesh curtain is drawn across it; an eagle coming around the oval will fly harmlessly onto the mesh. From there, the bird can easily be netted. Bangor Mom was captured and carried to a crate for car transport to the release site.



She would be set free near her old neighborhood, at a large field overlooking the Penobscot River in Brewer. Brad and Marc opened the crate.



She's out!



Photo by Sharon Fiedler



Photo by Sharon Fiedler



Photo by Sharon Fiedler



Photo by Sharon Fiedler



Photo by Sharon Fiedler



Photos by Sharon Fiedler

She was soon out of sight.



More details about the release can be found in this [media coverage](#) of the event.



Photos by Terry Heitz

June 8-9 in Bart's Place: The eaglets' nest has been exchanged for a larger one. The nest platform has been moved close to the open doors into the main habitat; older eagles were soon spending more time at that end of the habitat.



June 19: The eaglets were perching on the edge of the nest, and have been joined by a 2nd year bird (far right) who sometimes preferred their company to that of other birds in the main area.



The two eaglets were never far apart.





June 20: They have left the nest and are on an adjacent perch.





Meanwhile, back on Kenduskeag Avenue, Sharon has seen two eagles in the nest vicinity. By her bands, one of the birds was identified as Bangor Mom - and with her was what appeared to be a 4-year-old male!



Photos by Sharon Fiedler

A [BDN story](#) quoted Sharon: "She didn't let any grass grow under her talons, I guess. But she picked up with a younger man, which is a plus. She'll be able to train him."



July 3 The eaglets still have not left Bart's Place, but move around quite a bit. They've been joined by the adult from Addison, who'd been their role model several weeks earlier.



Wing stretches were becoming more frequent!



July 14-15: The Bangor eaglets have left Bart's Place and entered the main habitat. Other young eagles (far left and far right) are also housed there.

Of the two leg bands they will eventually wear, the red color bands have already been applied to allow easy identification among other birds.



The numbered silver bands will be applied just prior to release.

Regardless of options for other company, the Kenduskeag Avenue birds have remained close together.



August 5: They have been upgraded to the flyway. From below, Glori's camera has caught them in various flight maneuvers . . .





... as well as some more stationary acrobatics and stretches.



Regardless of what they were doing, our favorite photos from this day are of the two together.





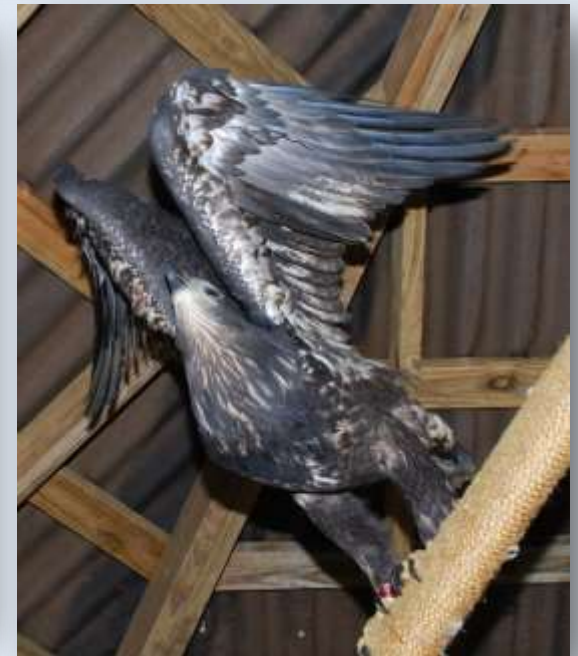
September 4: Little has changed over the last month. The birds have been increasingly active in the flyway, and have achieved the flight capability needed for release . . . **tomorrow!**



Their stretches showed the full extent of their mature flight feathers.



Their wings seemed to be almost pleading to have wind beneath them!



But as was the case a month ago, our favorite images show them together - this is how we will always remember them.





September 5: Departure from Avian Haven



The flyway curtain was drawn. One at a time, the birds flew around a corner and onto the mesh. From there, they were netted and secured.





Brent Bibles was on hand, coming full circle to participate in the release of the birds he'd rescued nearly four months ago. The birds were brought inside, weighed, banded, then loaded into crates for travel.

Where were the eagles headed? For several reasons, MDIFW raptor biologists have decided against returning them to Bangor. First, even if Kenduskeag Avenue's new resident male tolerated their arrival, young Maine eagles typically disperse from their parents' breeding territories in September. Further, the Penobscot River corridor has a history of eagle altercations, presumably over limited resources. Food supplies are plentiful along the Kennebec River; eagles are known to congregate more peaceably there. Therefore, the lower Kennebec was the release location of choice.

We are fortunate to have access to property overlooking the river on its west side. It is private property with limited parking; for that reason, and also to minimize stress on the birds, this would not be a media event. However, a few Kenduskeag Avenue residents (including Sharon F!) would see them off.





Marc held the bird we believed female; she weighed 4.65 kg (about 10 lbs) on her way out the door.



Brent had the smaller bird, presumably a male. His final recorded weight was 3.67 kg (about 8 lbs).



Marc and Brent prepared for lift-off.

Several photographs captured the birds leaving Marc's and Brent's hands.



Photo above by
Sharon Fiedler



Photo to left by
Glori Berry



Photos on Slides 68-77 by Terry Heitz













They flew off together at first, but then the female released by Marc circled back around overhead before heading off again in the direction taken by the male.





These were our last glimpses. Both birds were soon down along the river and out of sight. We expected no further news of them anytime soon.



But late that afternoon, we got a phone call from the property owner, Linda. She had just walked to the edge of the field overlooking the river. And there she had seen two fine-looking young eagles, having a grand time riding the wind over the river.





The story of the Kenduskeag Avenue eagles has a loose end - namely, the nature of the toxin that debilitated Bangor Mom and led to the death of her former mate. MDIFW's request for federal authorization to necropsy and take tissue samples for testing is still pending.

The circumstances surrounding the rescue and rehabilitation of these birds were unusual, to say the least! We received assistance from several sources, mostly colleagues with whom we already shared a working relationship. We thank in particular MDIFW Biologists Charlie Todd, Brad Allen, and Erynn Call; and also Game Warden Jim Fahey. Climber extraordinaire Brent Bibles saved the lives of the eaglets; without him, there would have been no story to tell.

Among the new friends we made along the way are several Kenduskeag Avenue neighborhood eagle watchers, especially Sharon Fiedler. We are grateful to all of the individuals mentioned above, plus many others who brought food and/or made financial contributions to help support the eagles' care.

