

Eagle Rescue on Elaine's Trail

Hours before tropical storm Isaias was due to hit Islesboro on August 4, I took a phone call at the Cregar Center from two young women, Grace Hartley and Nadia Grisaru, who had come upon a seriously disabled, juvenile, bald eagle on Elaine's Trail at IIT's Hutchins Marsh Preserve.

One of IIT's longer trails looping along the multi-fingered Marsh shoreline, the eagle was located about halfway. I contacted Avian Haven in nearby Freedom, Maine for guidance on how best to handle this situation. Following their advice as to what we'd need to rescue the bird, I called Chloe Joule, who brought a large animal crate, and Sue Hatch, with additional helpers Tom Tutor, Todd Congdon, and Michael Hutcherson, all met at the trail head at 5 p.m. We needed to work quickly in order to rescue the eagle before nightfall.

So disabled by neurological impediments, the juvenile did not put up a fight when Sue and Chloe, wearing leather gloves, approached with blankets to throw over it and safely stow it in the crate. At one point on the trek back along the trail, the eagle had become entangled and completely covered by a blanket. We were able to remove the crate's top half, rearrange the bird onto the blanket, and then reattach the cover without any trouble at all. At that moment this juvenile's fate seemed rather grim given its unresponsiveness. However, with the impending storm predicted to come with a deluge, it was clear we had to get this eagle into a warm, dry place for the night. And so all six rescuers continued to take turns, two at a time, carrying the crate out to the trail head.

It was close to 6pm when the eagle was safely stowed in the back of my Volvo station wagon. Grace and Nadia had found the eagle around 3pm. Had they not remained with the eagle until help arrived, I believe in the gloomy, stormy light locating it would have been very difficult since its wings were caked in mud and it lay in shallow, brackish water 10' below the trail. The crated eagle spent the night in my barn. The following morning I transported it to Avian Haven on the North Palermo Road, twenty minutes inland from Belfast.

Thank goodness for Avian Haven! Their confident, sure-footed guidance gave the eagle a fighting chance and its rescuers hope. The juvenile (estimated to be three months old) remained mostly still, hunkered down while being transported in the crate. Its back slowly rising and falling was often the only indication it was alive. Twice I watched episodes of the juvenile flopping onto its back and thrashing around to upright itself. In those moments, it looked at me as if completely lost.

This eagle has had a wonderfully successful recovery and was recently released as you'll see from the photos below. Many thanks to Grace Hartley and Nadia Grisaru, this juvenile's guardian angels. Thanks also to the rescuers – Sue Hatch, Tom Tutor, Todd Congdon, Michael Hutcherson and Chloe Joule for their quick response and aid.

An unexpected and delightful outcome of this trip to Palermo, Avian Haven asked if I would transport and release a cormorant that had been rescued several weeks earlier at Grindle Point after being found entangled in fishing line. A hot and humid eighty five degree day, by the time I was at Penobscot Bay my passenger was more than ready to fly over cool water. And indeed it

flew, jumping out of the crate the moment I opened the door. This cormorant flew and flew over the water, finally landing on a mooring. As I watched I somehow felt it was a sign that maybe our rescued juvenile would get to feel freedom again.

It certainly did fly freely again. Avian Haven reported on the bird's progress back to health (see quoted Avian Haven press release below). The eagle was released August 31, almost a month after its rescue, very much ready to soar above the Bay.

Robyn Congdon - Administrative Assistant, IIT.



"This [pictured above] is the young Bald Eagle who was rescued on Islesboro, August 4. He had been discovered stumbling about in a muddy estuary along a trail of the Islesboro Island Trust, whereupon several islanders pooled their resources to rescue the eagle from the mud and transport him to Avian Haven the following morning.

"The young eagle was markedly neurologic, with tremors, body contortions, and nystagmus (uncontrolled eye movements). Suspecting that the youngster might have eaten something inappropriate, we administered activated charcoal. By the next day, he was much better. Two days later, we were able to move him to an outdoor habitat where he easily flew up to the high perch.



The following week, he was upgraded to the main eagle cage where there were several other young eagles, plus two adults. Another week, and he was flying laps in the big flyway, ready to go! We released him yesterday, August 31, in an area where eagles congregate to catch fish at this time of year.

"All eagles leaving Avian Haven are banded with both State (red) and Federal (silver) ID bands. The numbers on the silver band are difficult to read from any distance, but the letters on the red band are fairly easy to see. This eagle's State ID is Red Right, M over M, or M/M.

“We wish this beautiful bird a long and healthy life! Thanks to everyone who assisted in his rescue!”

“photos by Terry Heitz <http://islesborostrandtrust.org> www.avianhaven.org/support.html”