



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE FEATURE RELEASE

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### RADIO BEACON FROM A SNAKE RIVER GARBAGE DUMP LEADS INVESTIGATORS TO SITE OF BALD EAGLE'S BURIAL

"He that has patience may compass anything," the 16th century French satirist Rabelais wrote.

"Patience," in both a literal and figurative way, coupled with some sophisticated 20th century technology, led investigators with the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last month to the conclusion of an unusual case involving the death of an endangered bald eagle.

A matchbox-sized radio transmitter emitting a prolonged rapid-pulse "distress" signal off the tail of a bald eagle nicknamed "Patience" led airborne biologists to a 50-acre island in Oregon's Snake River, where they uncovered the lone eagle's burial site.

Their discovery, after 3 months of charting the research bird's elusive migration path through the Intermountain West, led to an inquiry by Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement agents. Charged with the shooting of the endangered bald eagle was an Oregon rancher, who had tossed its carcass into the island's garbage dump last January. There, its miniature radio device continued to emit a staccato pulse that led its trackers ever closer to the scene of the bird's abrupt end.

In late July, after a lengthy investigation during which the Oregon man confessed to the shooting, the Federal Court in Portland, Oregon, ordered Evan John Mackey, 55, of Ontario, to pay a \$2,500 fine under a settlement with the U.S. Attorney's office. Under the agreement, one-half of Mackey's fine will be turned over to Glacier National Park's Bald Eagle Research Project to fund further research. Mackey received the fine and a 30-day suspended jail sentence for violating the Bald Eagle Protection Act.

"Patience," a 3-year-old female that had not yet acquired the "bald" head of white feathers distinctive of mature 5-year-old birds, became a research subject last October in the McDonald Creek section of Montana's Glacier Park. There, researchers captured the bird, attached the tiny radio transmitter and identification markers, and released it. In a program co-sponsored by the National Park Service and the University of Montana and supported by the National Audubon Society and the Wildlife Management Institute, the scientists are studying the migration patterns of the majestic birds, which are officially listed as "endangered" in 43 States and "threatened" in five others. (In Alaska, the species is not in such danger, however.)

An estimated 10 percent of the bald eagles known to winter in the United States pass through Glacier each fall, according to Dr. Riley McClelland, leader of the park's Bald Eagle Research Project. At times, their concentration

