

Millsfield the Eagle Goes Home

A wounded juvenile bald eagle found in October near the northern New Hampshire community of Millsfield, N.H. was released back into the wild on Tuesday, December 15 with an escort from the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, New Hampshire Audubon, Brookfield Renewable Power Company and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The eagle was found near the end of October with a gunshot wound to one of its wings. Veterinarian Dr. Mike Dutton repaired the damaged wing and turned the eagle over to Maria Colby, a licensed wildlife rehabilitator who lives in Henniker, N.H. With its wing in a sling, Colby provided medication, food, water and exercise to the bird through November and into the first weeks of December before its release.

New Hampshire Fish and Game Department conservation officers and special agents of the Service began a joint investigation into the incident. The Service also offered a reward of up to \$2,500 to the person or people who provide information leading to a conviction under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

On the morning of Dec.15, Colby prepared the eagle for vehicle transportation from her home to rendezvous with Chris Martins from the New Hampshire Audubon and special agents from the Service in Concord, N.H. From there the convoy drove north to the community of Milan where they joined up with representatives of the N.H. Fish and Game Department and Brookfield Renewable Power Company before driving together a short distance near the inlet canal to Brookfield Renewable Power's Pontook Hydroelectric facility. The venue was selected because several bald eagles congregate near the reservoir during the winter months, giving the young bird nearby role models to help it find food.

New Hampshire Biologists Andy Timmins and Will Staats, who initially took protective custody of the eagle, were part of the escort team. Moments before release, Staats named the eagle Millsfield and with Timmins standing close by lifted the bird up into the air and let him go. The eagle stretched out its wings and flew quickly out of sight into the surrounding forest.