# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release May 31, 1974 McGarvey 202/343-5634

## EAGLE "EGG-PLANT" SUCCESSFUL

Two bald eaglets have hatched in the Maine nests they were transplanted to as eggs in early May after they were taken from their parents' nests in Minnesota, Director Lynn A. Greenwalt of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service announced today.

This was the first such transplant experiment with the bald eagle.

The original plan called for six eggs to be transplanted from Minnesota, where the eagle population is healthy, to six nests in Maine, where pollution has affected eagle nest hatching in recent years. Only three eggs were taken from Minnesota because of the onset of bad tree climbing weather. The three were delivered to Maine and planted in nests the next day. One egg broke as it was being placed in the nest.

The two eaglets hatched out on May 16th. The foster parents appear convinced the birds are their own offspring and are caring for them normally with daily feeding and close guard of the nest area against possible enemies.

At the time of the transplant the two nests in Maine each contained one addled egg. These were removed and taken to the Fish and Wildlife Service's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center for pesticide analysis.

Neither one would have hatched in the wild. Analysis showed the shell of one was 31 percent thinner than healthy eagle eggs--a phenomenon that occurs from eagles eating prey containing hard pesticides picked up from

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their diet. The accumulation of pesticide residues increases with each succeeding level in the food chain, and in the case of eagles, the residues have seriously altered the birds' reproductive capability in Maine and other areas. Additionally, the contents of both eggs were examined and showed no embryonic development, probably because of dieldrin residues.

The eaglets will be banded by Fish and Wildlife Service biologists in the hope that their future movements and health can be monitored. This will take place in mid to late June.

"We are genuinely pleased with the results," Greenwalt said. "The concept of bald eagle transplants is now a valid, tested one, and future plans can be drawn up for similar transplants. Biologists were fearful that the disturbance of the egg-switch might prompt the foster parents to desert the nests, but this fear fortunately was not borne out by the experiment. The switch took less than 30 minutes from the time the foster parents left the nests until the eggs were switched and the parents returned. Both sets of parents kept a watchful vigil on the switching team and returned as soon as the area was cleared."

The parent eagles in Minnesota were left with plaster-filled goose eggs to maintain their interest in the nests. If they continue to incubate these dummy eggs, they will be provided a young bird from a Minnesota nest that hatches more than one eaglet, for many times there is a 4- to 6-day interval between hatching of multiple egg clutches, and the youngest, or runt, may die because it can't compete for the available food.

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Foster parent eagle guards nest in Maine while transplanted eggs incubate.

INT: 5480-74