



Eaglets to Eagles

They arrived on April 24, 2025...two tiny, right out of the egg, juvenile bald eaglets. They had to be removed from the nest, since it was way too close to the main runway on Fort Drum. All the military planes were continually taking off and landing, and the parent eagles were flying back and forth across the runway. It was surely a recipe for disaster. When they arrived, each one still had its egg tooth on, meaning they were just a few days old. They both were about the size of a navel orange. We knew we had our work cut out for us. I had ordered a huge eagle doll that could wrap around the tiny basket they were in, and I fed them tiny little bites of skinned meat with an eagle puppet. Their food preparation alone took about an hour and a half a day. Feeding and cleaning was very laborious. I got out all my eagle books and found that baby eagles have voracious appetites. They grow about a pound a week.

Soon they outgrew their tiny basket, and they graduated to baskets of ever-increasing sizes. Within about five weeks they were moved to a kiddie pool lined with yoga mats. We started taking them outdoors every day so they could get used to natural sounds and sights. At this point they began to walk like toddlers. They would stand, take a step and fall over. They weren't quite sure what to do with those two huge appendages (wings) on their sides. When they tried to flap them, that would surely send them tripping.

Time passed and they began to shed their natal down and grow their flight feathers. At this point they had learned to feed themselves from a bowl. Then they were given whole food that they had to figure out how to pull apart themselves. This was quite a challenge, since they didn't know you had to hold the food with your feet to pull it apart with your beak. Every day was a new learning experience.

Once they showed us they had tackled self-feeding and they were steady on their feet, they were moved to a twenty-foot aviary with perches of varying height with ramps. One day they flew from perch to perch. Now it was time to open the door of the aviary and allow them to come out and have the entire flight building to explore. They soon were flying back and forth from high perch to high perch. They were prey tested to be sure they could hunt and we knew they were ready to go.

On August 18th they were banded with both US Fish and Wildlife and NY State DEC bands. They were then taken to a wonderful release site in Altmar, NY. They did not hesitate to fly right off. A happy ending to a wonderful experience.





Miracle Child of the Year

In late spring we received a tiny orphaned barred owl. He was found alone and hungry on the ground. After rehydrating him, I cut up tiny little pieces of meat to feed him. He ate ravenously and in a little while settled down. Soon, I heard him vocalizing again. I wasn't too concerned because it is our experience that all baby owls beg for food. This time however, I noticed that when he made sounds, his chest was also moving and it sounded like he was wheezing. My worry was that perhaps he had aspergillosis, a common disease caused by a fungus that attacks the lungs and air sacs. I started him on anti-fungal medication and called our veterinarian's office to get him x-rayed. Dr. Jin was on duty, and she said she could see him. The x-rays gave no indication that he had aspergillosis, but she did notice that the wheezing

was coming from the throat and not the chest cavity. She then went down his throat with a scope and found him to be full of flukes, a worm parasite that is often carried by frogs. But how on earth would a baby barred owl get frogs? They don't eat frogs...do they? Then I started thinking back on the spring we had just had, with twenty-two straight days of rain. Walking through our backyard was like walking on a sponge. It made sense that all the tunnels made by field mice, moles, voles, and chipmunks, an owl's usual diet, were washed out. Perhaps the only thing the parents could find to feed him was frogs. After treating him with Drontal, a medication to kill flukes, he stopped all the wheezing and grew to be a normal, healthy owl. He was flight conditioned, and prey tested and released back to the wild.

Honing Our Hunting Skills

We raised five juvenile Great Horned Owls this year. All of them came to us covered in their natal down feathers. As they grew, they started to replace their baby feathers with their adult plumage. In the wild their parents would start to teach them how to hunt for themselves. We like to give them old phone books and catalogs. They know this is not food, but they love to rip them apart and shred them to pieces. It occupies their time and surely hones their hunting skills.



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