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## Injured Golden Eagle Rehabbed at National Aviary To Be Released March 22 Bird to be fitted with Telemetry Device as Part of Wind Power Study

(Pittsburgh - March 14, 2007) – A male golden eagle found caught in a leg trap in West Virginia is scheduled for release March 22 following nearly three months of rehabilitation that included surgery and intensive, round-the-clock treatment by National Aviary veterinary staff.

The bird will be fitted with a satellite telemetry device the day before its release as part of a study of how the development of wind power in Pennsylvania may influence golden eagles that migrate through the state. The study is being conducted by a team of researchers at the National Aviary, Powdermill Avian Research Center, the biological research station of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, and Lafayette College. The bird will be released near the site where it was found in time for spring migration.

The research team learned of the eagle and its injuries on January 5, when team members received a call from wildlife officials in West Virginia. The bird had been caught in a leg trap, and its injuries were extensive. Staff from the Aviary made the trek to pick up the eagle, administered emergency fluids and antibiotics, and trucked the bird back to the National Aviary hospital.

“Both sides of his leg were cut down to the bone from the trap, and the bone was crushed on one side, though not broken completely,” says Dr. Pilar Fish, National Aviary Director of Veterinary Services and Animal Programs. “It was evident that he had been in the trap for several days. He was dehydrated, stressed and infection had set in. The damage was so severe we initially thought it likely that he would lose his foot.”

A battery of tests showed anemia from blood loss and blood infection. The infection spread quickly, and initial efforts to administer antibiotics through his food proved unsuccessful. As a result, antibiotics were provided through daily injections, during which time his wounds were cleaned, and dead tissue and bone were removed.

“Catching up and treating a wild eagle is a challenge, not only because they are tremendously strong – their talons are capable of

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*Dr. Pilar Fish, left, examines the injured eagle, with the assistance of Dr. Todd Katzner and trainer Erin Estell*

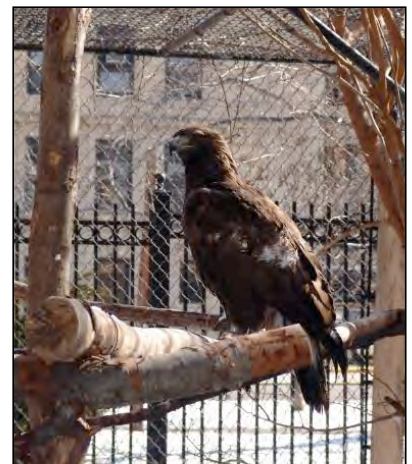
impaling and breaking a human arm – but also because we needed to keep the bird’s stress level as low as possible,” explains Dr. Fish. “He had to be netted and manually restrained by staff during examinations, tests and treatment.”

After 10 weeks of daily care and treatment, tests show that the infected bone has healed and the tissue has grown back normally.

“Amazingly, he has regained full function of the injured foot, which is necessary to his survival and his ability to capture and eat his prey,” says Fish. “Without that capability, we would never have been able to return him to the wild.”

National Aviary and Powdermill Nature Reserve staff will fit the bird with a telemetry unit on March 21, at which point the bird will be loaded in a crate in preparation for the drive to West Virginia and release the morning of March 22. The telemetry device is attached via a nonabrasive harness made of Teflon ribbon. Configured as a backpack, this tracking system is able to obtain highly accurate GPS-quality location fixes and then transmit these data via satellite to a computer on the ground.

“Data collected via satellite tracking from this eagle, along with information coming in from two other eagles tagged this past November, will for the first time provide detailed information on where and how individual eastern golden eagles migrate through the entire Appalachian Mountain flyway,” says Dr. Todd Katzner, Director of Conservation & Field Research at the National Aviary. “The data will be used to generate maps showing the specific route eagles take as they migrate through Pennsylvania. Upon completion of the study, findings will be shared with land managers and government officials for consideration during the siting, permitting and construction phases of wind farm development in Pennsylvania.”



*Ready for take-off after 10 weeks of round-the-clock care.*

In January, the project was awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Game Commission. A companion grant of \$20,000 was awarded by DCNR's Wild Resource Conservation Program to collaborator David Brandes of Lafayette College to develop a quantitative model of eagle migration through Pennsylvania, based on the data obtained from the satellite tracking project.

The public is invited to track the bird’s progress online at <http://www.aviary.org/csr/eaglePA.php>. As of mid-March, the eagles being tracked have started their northward migration from wintering grounds in West Virginia and Kentucky. With luck and favorable weather, the rehabilitated eagle will join other eagles as they travel to their Canadian breeding grounds.

Researchers collaborating on the project include Dr. Todd Katzner, Director of Conservation & Field Research at the National Aviary; Robert Mulvihill, Field Ornithology Projects Coordinator, Powdermill Avian Research Center; Michael Lanzone Assistant Field Ornithology Projects Coordinator, Powdermill Avian Research Center; Trish Miller, GIS Manager, Powdermill Nature Reserve; Dr. David Brandes, Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Lafayette College; and Dan Ombalski, Director, Tussey Mountain Hawkwatch.

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*The National Aviary inspires respect for nature through an appreciation of birds.*

*The mission of the Powdermill Nature Reserve is to advance understanding of our natural world and to communicate that knowledge through research, exhibits and educational programs.*