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Conn. River Eagle Nest Fails, But Six Young Eagles Are Growing at Fish & Wildlife's Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area

WATERBURY, VT – The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department announced today that Vermont's first pair of nesting eagles with young in 60 years has failed. Six young eagles are being reared successfully, however, in the eagle restoration project at the department's Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area.

"We knew at least one eaglet had hatched in the Connecticut River nest in Windham County," said Wildlife Biologist Forrest Hammond. "I visited the nest today, however, and confirmed that the eaglet has vanished. We can't be sure what may have caused the nest failure. There was evidence of a raccoon feeding on the carcass of an eaglet at the base of the nest tree. It appeared a raccoon had climbed an adjacent small tree and jumped onto the trunk of the nest tree, which had a predator guard on it. Whether or not the raccoon killed the chick or if it was just scavenging on the carcass is unknown."

Hammond points out that his department is working with conservation groups in order to protect the property where the eagles are nesting.

Steve Parren, the department's lead biologist on nongame species, explained that eagles nesting for the first time often do not succeed.

"Losing eaglets in a first nesting attempt during inclement weather is not unusual," said Parren. "They were at a very vulnerable stage and unable to stay warm on their own. Hopefully, the parents have bonded to the site. They certainly came back to it quickly this spring after starting to build the nest last year, which is a good indicator."

Six young eagles are growing fast in a bald eagle "hack box" at Fish & Wildlife's Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area in Addison. Five of the six will be fitted with radio tracking devices to monitor their progress when they are released in June.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is coordinating the bald eagle restoration effort in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Federation, Outreach for Earth Stewardship, Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS), and others.

Senator Jim Jeffords secured the funding for Vermont's eagle restoration project through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. His strong support of other funding sources, such as the State Wildlife Grants, is helping the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department restore and protect other wildlife to prevent them from becoming endangered.