

July, 2002



On The Wings of Eagles



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The Eagle Cam Has Arrived...

By: Richard A. Cooper

Ever wonder what bald eaglets do when the parents are gone from the nest? Well mostly they sleep but on occasion they get up on the side of the nest and flap their wings getting ready for the inevitable... fledging the nest.

The American Bald Eagle Foundation is glad to report that a grant from the Shirley Family Foundation has made it possible to mount a camera on top of a 65 foot telephone pole looking directly at a bald eagle nest. The nest

is only a mile from the foundation building and is home to two eaglets that hatched in the first week of June and, if all goes well, will most likely fledge the nest in September. As the summer goes by, the parents have slowed the amount of time spent in the nest. At first there was always one on the nest and feedings occurred every few hours. Now, as they reach an astounding size given how old they are, the parents are not on the nest as often. Although, if you visit the area of the nest, you are sure to see one or both with a close eye on the little ones.

From the nest site, the live video feed is transmitted all the way to the Foundation's natural history museum, and shown live on a 35" TV for all of our visitors to watch. The signal will also be available soon on our web site at: www.baldeagles.org. Anyone wishing to help fund programs like these can e-mail us at director@baldeagles.org or give us a call at 907-766-3094 and give us your ideas.

The American Bald Eagle Foundation would like to thank the Shirley Family Foundation for the grant to make this possible and Alaska Power and Telephone for their donation of time and electricity to mount and power the camera.

Winter plans for the eagle cam include a special mount on the council grounds of the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve so we can introduce to the world the amazing sight of 4000 bald eagles on a 4 mile stretch of the Chilkat River.

The American Bald Eagle Foundation

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Documenting a Legend

By: Jennifer Attaway, ABEF Summer Research Assistant, Georgia Southern University



I never imagined this would be so difficult. I was always jealous of my transcribing friends in the Anthropology department at Georgia Southern University. They looked so purposeful, so diligent in their attempts to record the personal histories and legacies of aging Statesboro residents. With their heads tilted to one side, a hand raised to press out any unnecessary noise that might possibly leak through their large headsets, the other hand rapidly taking notes, they looked like technologically sufficient monks. Brethren of preservation, who, between recordings and pages of typed interviews, discussed the nuances of language and meaning. I saw what they were doing as an interesting project. I view my current work as frighteningly important. I am taking someone's life long passion and trying to ensure that future generations will be able to learn about the Tlingit Box of Life, the history of the Chilkat Valley, and every animal in the foundation's diorama. Having written this, I suddenly realize that I am not just representing Dave and his work, but the populations that have lived in this area for thousands of years, both human and animal. Now I'm terrified.

It's 6 o'clock, an hour past closing time on a Monday, and I'm straining to make out a word from the mini-recorder. I have spent the day transcribing the third recording of Dave Olerud, ABEF's founder and wealth of knowledge. He is, without a doubt, a dynamic speaker, as so many visitors to the foundation tell me. The problem is that those dynamics do not seem to translate too well into my little machine. He is surprisingly swift in his wheelchair, and I have to work to keep up with him, all the while making sure that the recorder will pick up his voice, which is a soothing blend of Minnesota and Alaska. This can be confusing for a girl from Georgia, who has become accustomed to hearing the names of fish and birds brutalized by a harsh southern drawl. The names of places that do not seem to be on any maps are also proving to be a



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Haines... First Impressions

By Jessica Mutter, ABEF Summer Research Assistant, Columbia University



I arrived in Haines at 11:30 am on the morning of May 31st. Of course, to me it could have been any time of day or night; I had been traveling since 6 a.m. the day before. Not nonstop, of course. I drove three hours to the REI in Atlanta to buy some rain gear, I flew from there to Juneau over the course of eleven hours. I slept on a feather bed in a B&B. Up at 4:30 am the next morning, I was on a bus to the ferry by six, leaving Juneau by seven, and arrived in Haines about three and a half hours later. I didn't notice

much about Haines at the time, being jet-lagged, dehydrated and suffering from caffeine withdrawal. I was clueless about what kind of world I had entered, and did not know all of the things I would learn over the course of the summer.

I go to school in New York City. Most of the students at my university dream of one day becoming doctors, lawyers or CEOs of major corporations. That's what their parents are. I am still unsure of what I want to become, but I had considered studying political science. I am sort of fascinated by American politics, although I don't know if I want to become a part of them. Regardless, I had very little experience with nature and wanted to see what it was like to study from real life instead of a textbook.

I have not encountered any textbooks yet, and rarely do I see a manual. All of the eagle facts I have accumulated over the past month have come from someone's mouth, or more accurately from several people's mouths. Dave Olerud, the founder of the ABEF, is definitely the most helpful in teaching me. I was also delighted to discover how environmentally conscious everyone is. Here in Haines, everyone pays attention to what the Fish and Game Department is doing. They are annoyed at the bears that sometimes dig into their garbage, but they also wonder why the bears are coming into town. Is the Sockeye run smaller this year? They watch the ecosystem carefully, noting changes in the behavior and location of its animals. They watch the size and color and therefore the health of its plants. People argue about how other members of the community are treating the environment and how to properly live in it. Their disagreement gives me hope; if no one cared about the environment, no one would talk about it.

The Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve is another world I entered



Photo, courtesy of Dan Hart

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Over the River and Through the Woods...

By Jessica Mutter

Field research. Is that what this is supposed to be? I am having too much fun to call this field research. I am sitting in a big rubber raft with a group of tourists and a guide. We are drifting down the river, making conversation and occasionally gawking at a nearby eagle or its nest. I am shivering. Every time I take one of these trips, I seem to forget the fact that it is cooler and windier on the river. But that's ok because they'll be giving the tourists hot drinks after the trip and that means I can have some, too. For now, shivering makes me smile (or maybe I am just gritting my teeth), so I scan through the upper parts of the trees, looking for golf balls. From far away, an eagle in the trees looks like a golf ball because all that stands out is its white head.

Three times a week, I go out into the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve or Chilkoot Lake to do my field research. I measure water temperature, water level, and air temperature. I observe weather conditions and list the animals that I see, particularly bald eagles. I also note how many eagle nests I see and whether I think they are active or inactive this year. This research is important to the ABEF, which gets information like mine from various sources around town. I merely add to the vast compilation of information about the ever-changing ecosystem in and around Haines, Alaska.

My work is important, but I hardly feel like a serious naturalist, which is what most of the tourists think I am when they see me taking notes. I enjoy these trips. I walk down to the dock and sit on the bus, chatting with the guides until the tourists arrive. Then I chat with the tourists. We put on big rubber boots and are taught how to get into the raft without falling. We gaze around at the beautiful Alaskan scenery and

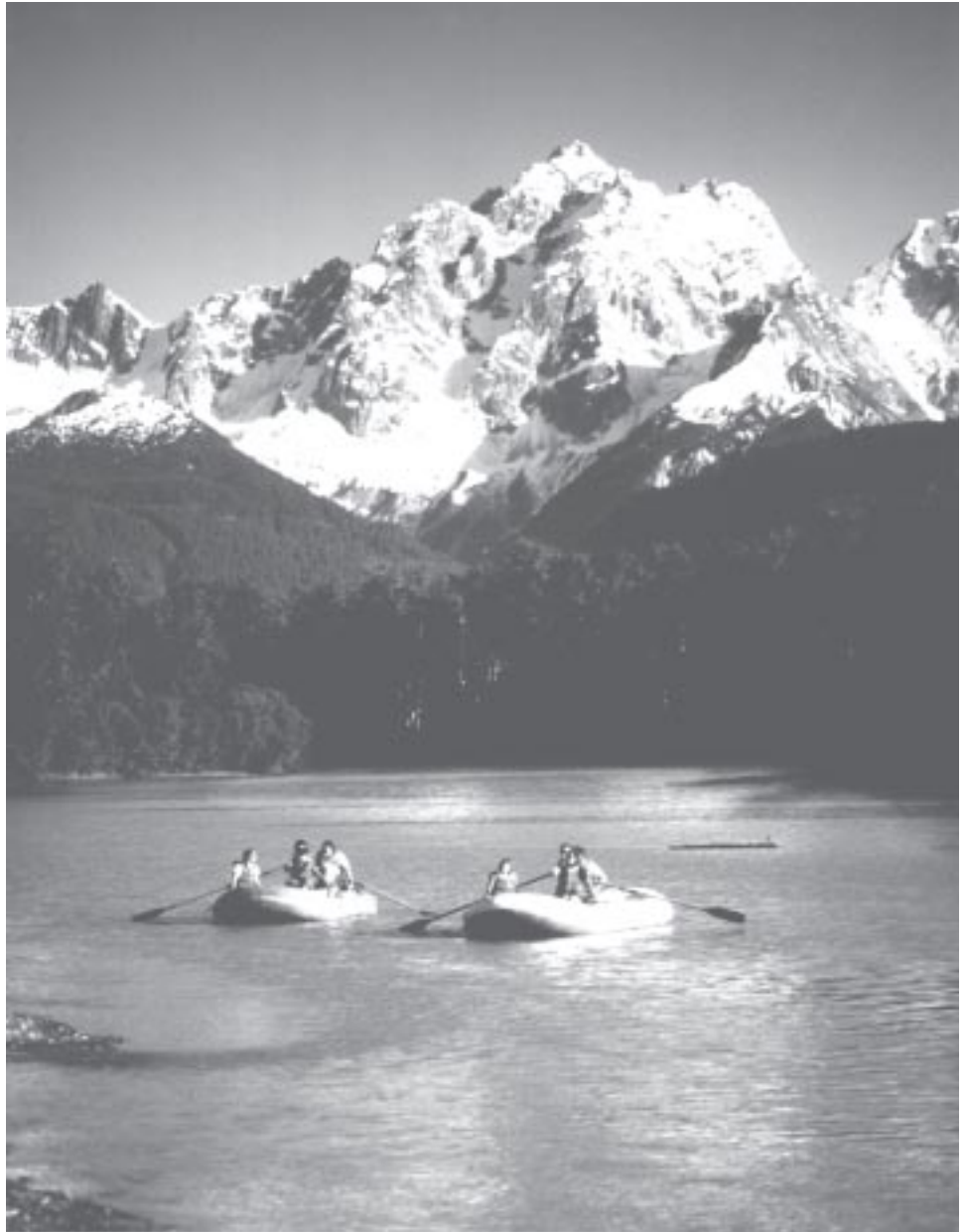


Photo Courtesy of Chilkat Guides © Bart Henderson

challenge. I am learning that these names seem to be a problem for people who have lived here for long periods of time. “Kusawa Lake,” for instance, and “Endicott River,” went through several vowel transitions before Dave finally called his wife, Char, and she provided us with the correct spelling. At least we hope so.

I am going to be honest with you. I am not sure how to adequately relate the challenges I am experiencing during the course of this project. The spelling problems are amusing, the subtle differences of accent are entertaining, but the desperation to “do it right” is exasperating. I am torn between being totally true to the art of transcription, which dictates that I include everything from botched sentences to accidental disagreements between subject and verb, or making Dave sound like he is reading from the latest edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. This may come as a surprise to some of you, but people do not always speak in complete, grammatically correct sentences. I am sure that there is the occasional exception to this rule, but I am not that exception. And neither is Dave. I am beginning to believe that not being perfect is what makes him so good.



There are days when I want to hang the whole thing up, or at least hand it to someone else, because I feel that I am mis-representing him by typing every word that he has spoken extemporaneously. When I read over the typed pages, I worry that I am making him sound like an idiot. I worry that someone who might not know him will misunderstand, because by simply reading it he or she will not have the almost hypnotic steadiness of his voice. Those of you who have heard him speak will know what I mean. His mind works so quickly that sometimes his mouth simply can not keep up. I have tried to dignify the typing by simply putting a dash where his mouth gave up but his mind kept going. He will literally end a sentence while simultaneously beginning another, leaving the first at a critical point never to be explained. Or so one would think. Somehow, despite these conflicts between mouth and mind, he does reach a conclusion.

When I tell people what I am doing, they react immediately. Some just look at me, some laugh out loud, a few have even apologized. All of them ask how long I am planning to stay. I talked to my mom about extending my stay through September. She asked what was going on, and I explained the project at hand. She said, “Do you think you’ll be able to come home for Christmas?”

Now it is Friday, and I am waiting for Dave to arrive. Hopefully, we will be able to sit down and record a narration for the “Wintering Eagles” video. This has been a goal for the past week. There is still so much to cover, so many things to get on tape. I have taken to simply catching him talking when I can, usually when he is with visitors. That is when he is most passionate about his work, and I love catching those moments on tape. I feel that I have been given a responsibility and a wonderful opportunity. By the end of this Alaskan adventure, I hope to leave behind a stack of tapes and volumes worth of transcription. I want those transcriptions to be more than accurate. I want them to be faithful. I want Dave’s grandchildren to be able to read about the Kelsall River and the precious flesh of the Yellow-Eye Rockfish. I want them to recognize his unique wording and be able to hear him saying what I have typed. Dave’s knowledge is extensive, and I want to make sure that it lasts for generations to come.

Membership Update

New and renewing members

Martha Tracy	Ken George
Alan Traut	Rev. & Mrs. David A. Wolber
Kyle Waite	Dave Hunsaker and Annie Calkins
John and Polly Derr	Sherri King
Michael V. O'Connor	Dave Erley
Steve Heselton and Karen Kelly	Tom M. Hills
Kathie Arnold	Wayne Selmer
Helfrid & Marie Peterson	Kurt & Barbara Voester
Warren and Marry Price	Peter & Deanna Feliciano
Jack Dowell	Lee and Clarice Wheeler
Brenna Palmer	Nelson and Gail DuBois
Renee Gallagher	Norm Sollie
Craig and Marcia McKenzie	Bill and Diana Wagasy
Ron Crecelius	Mr. & Mrs. Stanley G. Laing
Suzanne & Norm Smith	Dr. Franklin Adams
The Mutter Family	David and Claudia D'Hooge
Raymond Kearns	Kevin Santone
J. Robert Turnbull, Jr.	Ethelyn L. Dunbar
Tom Schriver	John Ledesma
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Col. Suellyn W. Novak	John and Linda McNamara
Hal du Pont	Gilles Henry
Jeanne Alley	Lori Smith
Richard & Sheryl Bankston	Mike and Pauline Case
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Jean and Sheldon Scarrott	Jeffrey Hawthorne
Rosemarie Howerton	Joseph W. Hess
Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm McWhorter	
Victoria Hardy	
Kenneth Werring	
Margaret Ann Anderson	

New Lifetime Members!

Craig and Beth Jones

Thank you to ALL of our new and renewing members! You make all of our educational and research projects possible. For more information on the research of the American Bald Eagle Foundation, please visit our web site at www.baldeagles.org or e-mail the director at director@baldeagles.org

First Impressions... from page 3.

sleepily, unaware of its importance. The bus ride to the beginning of the route took half an hour, and I had been up late the night before watching a movie and was nodding off at regular intervals. As we drove by the Council Grounds, the tour guide's voice picked up a bit, and I wondered what was so great about this area. It looked like the greyish tidewaters of the Georgia coast- not very pretty and not exactly brimming with wildlife. I have come to learn over the years that first impressions are often misleading, and my first impression of the Chilkat River was incorrect. I did not see any wildlife, but that didn't mean that it wasn't there. Within two weeks of being on this river, twice a week, I had seen moose, bears and more eagles than I can count. I saw an Arctic Tern, which I now think is one of the prettiest and coolest birds in the world. The flowers also started to come out. Pink Sitka roses, famous for their vitamin C content, purple stalks of fireweed that set the river banks ablaze and Cow Parsley that one tourist called "Queen Anne's Lace on steroids" dazzled the tourists and myself. The guides pointed out eagle's nests. I learned how important the Chilkat River was to the eagles- five types of salmon, come up the river to spawn from April to January. The river doesn't freeze in the winter and the salmon run late into January, providing an excellent source of food for thousands of eagles. I'm told to come back in November, when eagles sit in trees like Christmas ornaments, especially in the Council Grounds, and eat salmon. November is out of the question; I have three more years of school to complete, but I'd like to come back sometime to view these beautiful birds and to wander around Haines, my home for ten weeks and the place where I learned the most about the natural world around me.

Over the River...from page 4

gasp as an eagle flies over our heads. (I make a mark on my paper.) Binoculars are passed around when we travel further from the trees, and cameras are whipped out when we see a bear with her two cubs (again, I take notes). I ask and answer questions. “How old does an eagle get?” “What does it like to eat?” “Are the bears dangerous?” An eagle can live up to 35 years in the wild. The eagles around here love to eat fish but will eat small mammals and even other birds. Yes, the bears ARE dangerous. Don’t walk around the woods alone.

By the end of the trip, my paper is full of strange markings and numbers. It is barely decipherable, not to mention folded every which way and slightly crumpled. I have done my work. My haphazard markings will soon be entered into an organized spreadsheet with other pieces of data gathered in a similar way, and then it will be looked over and compared to other days, months, and years. I do not think of this. I am still having fun, clutching my cup of hot cocoa tightly because my hands are sort of numb. I will have to bring gloves next time. Is this what it feels like to love your work? I know few people who actually enjoy getting up and going to work, and I consider them lucky. For me, the getting up part takes some time, but I love doing my field research. This summer, I suppose I am one of the lucky ones. I can’t wait to be on the water again.



Photo: Courtesy of Bob Adkins

Adopt a Bald Eagle Nest in the Chilkat Valley!

Nesting sites for the American Bald Eagle are an incredible thing to watch. To see these magnificent birds raise their young is a rare treat and the American Bald Eagle Foundation is working hard to make it possible for the whole world to witness. Our Bald Eagle Cam is up and running and will be live on our web site shortly. It is currently live inside our facility and the eaglets are coming along nicely!



Photo: Courtesy of Dan Hart

Your Rewards will be:

- A topographic map of the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve marked with the location of YOUR bald eagle nest.
- A beautiful 5X7 photo that shows a mother eagle in a nest with two eaglets.
- A certificate of appreciation that shows you support research and educational activities of the American Bald Eagle Foundation.
- A complimentary membership in the American Bald Eagle Foundation.
- The book “Valley of the Eagles” by Cary Anderson.

Y o u r i n v i t a t i o n t o j o i n t h e A m e r i c a n B a l d E a g l e F o u n d a t i o n

If you are not already a member of this dynamic conservation organization, you are invited to complete the application below and mail it to the American Bald Eagle Foundation today!

Support from members all over the world allows the American Bald Eagle Foundation, through our innovative educational and research programs, to work for the conservation of the American Bald Eagle and all of the wildlife that shares its habitat.

Remember, your contributions are 100% TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

Membership Levels

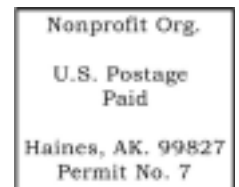
Student*	\$15.00	Silver	\$100.00
Individual*	\$25.00	Gold	\$250.00
Family*	\$40.00	Platinum	\$500.00

Lifetime / \$1,000 Corporate** / \$5,000 Benefactor** / \$10,000 Patron** / \$20,000**

* International rates for these memberships are \$10 higher i.e. \$25, \$35 & \$50 respectively.

** These memberships can be paid for in five (5) equal yearly installments.

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