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American Eagle Foundation e-Newsletter February 2014



American Eagle Foundation February 2014 Newsletter

The non-profit American Eagle Foundation has concluded another busy season educating the public about the USA's National Symbol, the Bald Eagle, and caring for various birds of prey (both permanent residents and rescues). We hope you'll take time to read this e-Newsletter and find out what the AEF, the Bald Eagle Challenger, and some of our other feathered friends have been up to since October 2013.

Eagle Challenger's New Flight Video

Many of you are already familiar with our beautiful "*When Challenger Flies*" music video, which has had millions of YouTube views. We now have another stunning video to share with you! See the eagle Challenger soar at major events over the past 5 years, accompanied by a beautiful *a cappella* rendition of the Star Spangled Banner.

[Watch Challenger Flight Video.](#)



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"Eagle Mountain Sanctuary" Aviary - Nest Building, Landscaping, & Annual Eagle Physicals

On November 4, 2013, the American Eagle Foundation (AEF) staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to "catch up" all the eagles inside Dollywood's "Eagle Mountain Sanctuary" educational exhibit to perform annual physicals by University of Tennessee veterinarians and veterinary students. Also, the eagle nests were refurbished and grounds were cleaned inside the aviary in preparation for another season.

In addition, Dollywood has completed major work needed to secure and repair the aviary where non-releasable Bald Eagles

Independence and Franklin reside. This bonded eagle pair returned to their familiar quarters February 15, and we expect the 2014 nesting season to begin shortly. [Highlights From "The Homecoming."](#)

Be sure to watch their Eagle Nest Cam from March through July 2014.



L-R Top: Beth Parker climbs the steep hills inside the aviary; Laura Sterbens & Christian Knatt refurbish an eagle nest; Dr. Mike Jones & Laura Sterbens perform a physical on a resident eagle.

L-R Bottom: Julia Cecere and University of TN veterinary student perform a physical on a resident eagle; The AEF Crew line up for a group photo: (Dennis Bauer, Rob West, Michelle Bauer, Julia Cecere, Christian Knatt, Al Cecere, Beth Parker, Terry Sherred, Laura Cecere-Sterbens, Rebecca Krebbs, Christine Blackwell, Mike Acuff, and Madison Abell); Christian and Madison are ready to catch an eagle.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Conservation Awards Ceremony

On October 30, 2013, the Bald Eagle Challenger, Al Cecere, and AEF Staff traveled to Atlanta, GA to attend and participate in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Regional Conservation Awards ceremony. This event honored 32 individuals and groups for their extraordinary conservation efforts and services. The awards were presented by USFWS Regional Director, Cindy Dohner.

Challenger flew over the audience during the singing of the Star Spangled Banner to begin the ceremony. To see Challenger fly at an event celebrating conservation is a visual reminder of how a species on the verge of extinction can make a significant comeback when people



Laura Cecere-Sterbens and Bald Eagle Challenger

are focused on a common goal.



2013 Veterans Day, Fox & Friends TV Show - NYC

On Veterans Day, November 11, 2013, Al Cecere and the Bald Eagle Challenger appeared on the popular Fox & Friends TV morning show in New York City. Al talked about the importance of acknowledging and remembering the sacrifices of our nation's servicemen and servicewomen, both active duty and veterans.

For the first time on national television, Al introduced the AEF's newest sponsored project, the Northeast Florida (NEFL) Eagle Nest Cam, which is equipped with two high-definition video cameras that capture the daily life of Romeo and Juliet, a pair of wild Bald Eagles.

[Watch Al's TV Interview Here.](#)

AEF Reaches Thousands of Students Via ChannelOne

While in New York City on November 12, 2013, the Bald Eagle Challenger and Al Cecere filmed a ChannelOne News segment titled "Pop Quiz: The Bald Eagle." This episode was broadcast to 7,000 schools nationwide on December 17, 2013.

For over 23 years, ChannelOne has been bringing the latest news from around the world to nearly 5 million young people. They have won many awards, including 2 George Foster Peabody awards for excellence in journalism.

[Watch Al's TV Segment Here.](#)



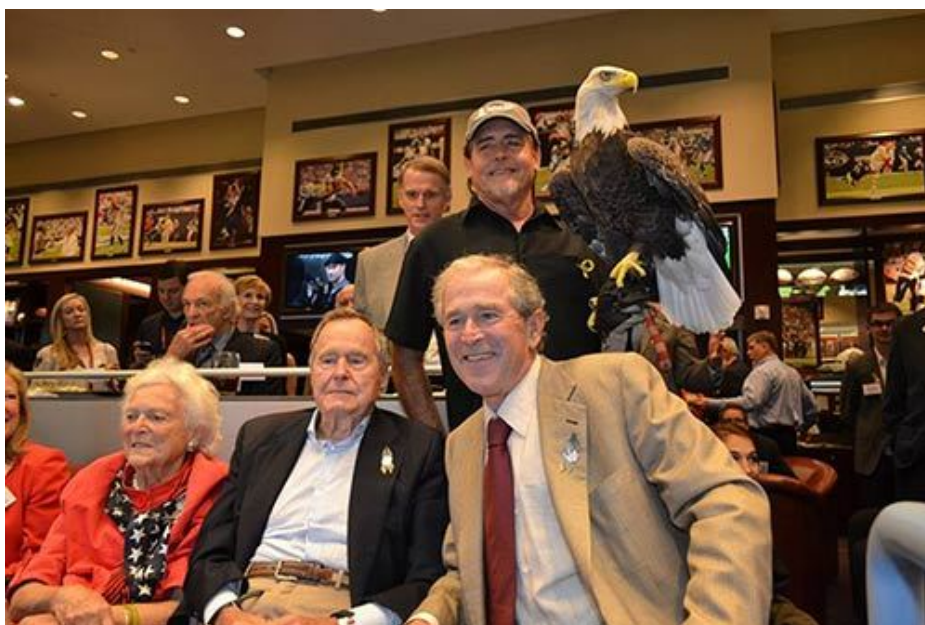
Tennessee Titans vs. Indianapolis Colts NFL Game - Nashville, TN

Immediately following a November visit to New York City, the AEF crew and the Bald Eagle Challenger headed down to Nashville, TN to conduct an educational program in an elementary school and to participate in a National Anthem ceremony at a Tennessee Titans vs. Indianapolis Colts football game. Challenger soared over the crowd at LP Field, delivering yet another flawless and soul-stirring flight. The AEF's videographer, Kevin Tierney, was able to attend, and later compiled amazing video footage from three different camera views.

[Watch Challenger's Flight At TN Titans Game](#)



Houston Texans vs. Oakland Raiders NFL Game - Houston, TX



First Lady Barbara Bush, Presidents George W. Bush, George H. W. Bush, Al Cecere, and eagle Challenger

On November 17, 2013, the Houston Texans hosted the Oakland Raiders at their Military Appreciation Game inside Reliant Stadium. Presidents George W. Bush and George H. W. Bush, First Lady Barbara Bush, and First Lady Laura Bush were among those guests who saw the Bald Eagle Challenger fly during the Gatlin Brothers' rendition of the Star Spangled Banner. This was Laura Cercere-Sterbens first official "catch" of the eagle during a major league football game - and, of course, she did it flawlessly! Challenger and AI were proud!



Laura Sterbens makes perfect eagle "catch" for first time at an NFL football game.



It takes a team! Rob West, Christian Knatt, Julia Cecere, Al Cecere, eagle Challenger, & Laura Cecere-Sterbens

Student School Outreach & Visit to Nike Headquarters - Portland, OR

The Bald Eagle Challenger took his first trip to Oregon this past fall and visited Nike's Headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon. The AEF staff was given a tour of Nike's fabulous facilities and ate a healthy lunch inside their cafeteria. Of course, Challenger was happy to do photos with a number of Nike employees.

Also, Challenger participated in an educational program at Edy Ridge Elementary School, where he captured the undivided attention of over 500 children by flying inside the gymnasium. Captivated, awestruck and well-behaved, the students learned all about Challenger and eagles in general. In addition, they were introduced to the AEF's new Eagle Nest Cam in Northeast Florida, which features a wild Bald Eagle nesting pair named Romeo and Juliet.

[Watch Northeast Florida Eagle Nest Cam.](#)



Students from Edy Ridge Elementary School learned about Challenger and eagle conservation.



Students were captivated as they watched Challenger fly.



AEF staff members (Laura Sterbens, Julia Cecere, Al Cecere, and the eagle Challenger) share a photo op with their gracious host family while in Oregon.

Thanksgiving At University of Michigan - Ann Arbor, MI

During Thanksgiving weekend, the American Eagle Foundation's staff and Bald Eagle Challenger traveled to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where Challenger performed not one, but two flyovers during the National Anthem! His first appearance was at the University of Michigan basketball game (Michigan vs. Coppin State) on Friday, Nov. 29, 2013. The second was at a U of M football game (Michigan vs. Ohio State) on Nov. 30.

The University's GoPro cam and the AEF's new GoPro cam were used to record Challenger's flight during the football game.

[Watch Challenger's Flight.](#)



AEF Staff (L-R): Gretchen Cecere, Beth Parker, Christian Knatt, Al Cecere, Challenger, Julia Cecere, Laura Cecere-Sterbens

Eagle Challenger Attends Star-Studded Art Basel Event - Miami, FL

Escaping December's cold weather in Tennessee, the Bald Eagle Challenger jetted off to sunny Miami, Florida to attend a high-profile corporate event on the evening of December 4, 2013. The event was hosted by famous wrist-watch designer, Roger Dubois and his company. Al Cecere, Challenger, and AEF staff members Laura Sterbens and Julia Cecere mingled with the guests, educating them about Bald Eagles and the mission of the American Eagle Foundation. Celebrity guests Gerard Butler and Eva Longoria were among those who had the opportunity to speak with Al, meet Challenger, and better understand the inspirational story of how Challenger became a conservation Ambassador for America.



Gerard Butler, Al Cecere,
eagle Challenger



Before heading home,
eagle Challenger and Julia Cecere
take one last look at the ocean.



Eva Longoria, Al Cecere,
eagle Challenger

Indianapolis Colts vs. Kansas City Chiefs NFL Playoff Game - Indianapolis, IN

The Bald Eagle Challenger's last flight of the 2013 NFL season took place on Jan. 4, 2014 at the Indianapolis Colts' stadium during their NFL Wildcard Playoff game against the Kansas City Chiefs. With arctic temperatures and snow outside, Challenger and the AEF crew were grateful to be indoors at Lucas Field.

[Check Out This Awesome Video](#) of Challenger soaring over a gigantic field-sized U.S. flag.



Challenger has a first-class carrier (with awesome cover), thanks to We Move Animals!

Nat Geo Wild's "We Move Animals" Features Eagle Challenger During First Episode!

During the summer of 2013, a film crew from Nat Geo Wild's "We Move Animals" visited the American Eagle Foundation in Pigeon Forge, TN. They knew that the AEF had the "most famous Bald Eagle in the world," and offered to make a new custom carrier so that Challenger could safely and comfortably travel on airplanes while making appearances across the nation.

While at the AEF facilities, the TV production crew saw Challenger fly during a training session, and then met with staff to better understand the most important criteria in designing such a carrier. The finished product was seamless, safe, & ideally suited for Challenger's travels on Delta Airlines.

Before departing from Tennessee, the crew from "We Move Animals" attended the release of the AEF's captive-hatched eaglets Destiny and Thunderbird on Douglas Lake from an artificial nesting tower.

The entire episode was shown on the *Nat Geo Wild* cable channel on January 18, 22, & 29, 2014. [Check Out Our TV Episode.](#)

Bald Eagle Featured Among Top 10 Conservation Successes In "Back From the Brink" Report

On the 40th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act (December 28, 2013), the Endangered Species Coalition marked this important milestone with a new report highlighting 10 of the great wildlife conservation accomplishments since the Act's passage in 1973. Many species were nominated for this important report, and a panel of distinguished scientists then reviewed the nominations and decided which species to include.

The American Eagle Foundation (AEF) nominated the Bald Eagle because of the substantial recovery of Bald Eagles to date. This includes their removal from "endangered" status in 1995, and "threatened" status in 2007.

At least 16 states have released fledgling Bald Eagles from their hatch sites to stimulate renewed natural nesting. In 1984, the AEF began national fundraising to help support Bald Eagle recovery.

In 1980, Tennessee was one of the first states to hatch Bald Eagles. New York State was first in 1976, with Georgia the first Southeastern state in 1979. From 1980-2013, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, along with the AEF and other key partners, have led the nation with 354 such releases from seven Tennessee "hatch sites." As of this past year, the AEF has been responsible for releasing 128 of those 354 Bald Eagles on East Tennessee's Douglas Lake (since 1992) and has financially assisted other hatch releases.

[To Access Complete Report \(PDF\), Click Here.](#) The document is beautifully done, with stunning photographs and information about each of the species chosen.



Wind Turbine Companies Given 30-Year Exemption From Federal Government To Kill Eagles

Al Cecere, President of the American Eagle Foundation, has joined the controversial conversation regarding wind turbines and their effects on flying wildlife, particularly Bald and Golden Eagles. The Federal Government has extended, for 30 years, a no-penalty phase for wind energy companies whose turbines kill eagles. This was done in order to foster development in "green renewable energy."

Audubon President and CEO David Yarnold reacted to this ruling with the following statement: *"Instead of balancing the need for conservation and renewable energy, [the Department of the Interior] wrote the wind industry a blank check."*

On December 9th, Al appeared on Fox News to discuss the ramifications of this extension, stating: *"I think this is appalling and outrageous. I don't think this is good conservation policy. I think this is a lot of politics, and, believe me, I educate people on both sides of the aisle. I've been saving eagles for nearly 30 years. It took over 30 years to bring the Bald Eagle back from the brink of extinction. A lot of work by hundreds of conservation groups and thousands of individuals across the country have put their heart and soul into this effort. To essentially give power companies a 30-year hunting license to kill eagles and other birds is unconscionable. I think we're opening a Pandora's Box that will kill millions of birds over the next 30 years, maybe tens of millions. I don't understand why we're making this devastating and senseless compromise."*

[Watch Al's Interview On Fox TV.](#)

Baby Eaglets Hatch In AEF-Sponsored NE Florida Nest - Just In Time For Christmas!

Tens of thousands of people watched with joy and anticipation as the AEF's high definition video cams streamed every minute of the birth of baby eaglets, Samson (Dec. 23) and Delilah (Dec. 20). The eaglets have since grown from tiny grey fluff balls to nearly full-size, brown-feathered Bald Eaglets - showing off their talons, flight feathers, full crops, big wing spans, and inquisitive natures. Although they still rely primarily on parents Romeo and Juliet, they are now learning to eat by themselves. Food is plentiful in the nest, and sibling rivalry, often seen between eaglets in the same nest, is almost non-existent. This makes for relaxed viewing and lots of smiles by Eagle Nest Cam fans. Many videos and photos showing ongoing development of the eaglets and endearing moments in the nest have been posted on the [AEF Facebook Page](#).

"A word of appreciation must be given to our magnificent camera operators, who are scattered from the East Coast to the West Coast. They have devoted untold hours at their computers, skillfully controlling the camera from thousands of miles away! Another hearty thank you goes out to our unsurpassed Mod Squad - those dedicated souls who welcome and educate all the thousands of visitors who come to our eagle cam web page and stay to 'Chat.' We could not make this project successful without the help of all of you," said AEF President Al Cecere.

1 week**2 weeks****3 Weeks****4 Weeks****5 Weeks****7 Weeks**

Important Links in Viewing the Eaglets:

[Close Up View Of The Nest](#); [The Nest Tree From A Distance](#); [Facebook Page](#).

Volunteer Spotlight: Barbara Rushing

Barbara has been volunteering at the American Eagle Foundation for about 7 years, and works with all the birds, except the eagles. It gives her great satisfaction to know she is helping the birds, and she enjoys the people who come to see them. She loves all the birds at AEF, but if she had to pick a favorite, it just might be Luci, a rescued non-releasable Swainson's Hawk.

Barbara is retired from AT&T, and has a daughter who lives in Florida. The AEF is fortunate to have her as a cheerful and hard-working volunteer. Barbara has several birds of her own, including cockatiels. She has rescued all sorts of birds, and raised them until they were able to fly.



2014 AEF Grant Winners Announced

In November 2013, the American Eagle Foundation announced the winners of its 2014 nationwide Bald Eagle project grants. AEF awarded \$99,986 for projects within the grant limit of \$100,000 for 2014. The following 8 winning projects are listed alphabetically (by lead agency), with most having multiple partners and cooperators:

1. Arizona Game & Fish Department; Phoenix, AZ: "Arizona Bald Eagle Nest Watch" - \$10,000
2. Biodiversity Research Institute; Gorham, ME: "Bald Eagle Use of Sebasticook River, with Landowner Outreach" - \$12,047
3. Conserve Wildlife of New Jersey; Trenton, NJ: "Monitoring & Outreach of NJ Wintering and Nesting Bald Eagles" - \$15,000
4. Delaware Highlands Conservancy; Hawley, PA; "Connecting Through Eagles" - \$8,500
5. Georgia Department of Natural Resources; "Aerial Surveys of AVM Disease (Avian Vacuolar Myelinopathy) in Bald Eagles" - \$18,571
6. New Hampshire Audubon; Concord, NH; "Resurgence of Bald Eagles in the Connecticut River Watershed" - \$10,000
7. WV University - Div. of Natural Resources; Morgantown, WV; "Telemetry of 4 Bald Eagles in Midwest Via Movement & Spatial Analysis" - \$16,250
8. William & Mary Center for Conservation Biology; Williamsburg, VA; "Creation of National Registry of Bald Eagle Communal Roosts" - \$9,618



The AEF obtained funding for this grant program in 2004, when both the U.S. Senate and House UNANIMOUSLY passed the "*Bald Eagle Commemorative Coin Act*" (signed into law by President George W. Bush). Congress authorized the U.S. Mint to mint gold, silver, and clad coins, which they sold to the public in 2008. Sales of the coins by the U.S. Mint to the general public generated \$7.8 million in 2008, which Congress designated that the AEF utilize for the benefit of Bald Eagles. AEF set aside 75% of these funds, or approximately \$5.8 million, to perpetually grow in the American Eagle Fund to provide competitive annual grants for Bald Eagle projects. [These coins can still be purchased on the AEF website.](#)

[Grant applications](#) are received from July 1 - September 1 of each year for projects during the next calendar year. The AEF Bald Eagle Grant Advisory Team, composed of a 12-person panel of eagle experts, numerically rates all grant applications received. Bob Hatcher, retired TN Endangered Wildlife Coordinator, has served as *Grants Administrator*. Starting in 2013, Ms. Jody Millar, a retired National Bald Eagle Coordinator with the USFWS, became the AEF's *Grant Coordinator* and is responsible for processing Bald Eagle grant applications.

Congratulations to all our winners!

AEF to Partner With Radnor Lake In Nashville, TN For Eagle Education Project

Since Tennessee's Bald Eagle recovery efforts began in 1980, strategic partnerships have been crucial to accomplishing Bald Eagle conservation goals. Steve Ward, Manager of the Radnor Lake State Natural Area of Nashville, TN, recently invited the American Eagle Foundation (AEF) to partner with Radnor Lake this coming year to update their Bald Eagle display and to finalize the design of Radnor's Bald Eagle aviary, which is already under construction and is expected to open in Spring of 2014.

Radnor Lake plans to house at least two Bald Eagles and other raptors in their aviary. About a year ago, Steve toured AEF's facilities with AEF President Al Cecere to get ideas for the Radnor Lake aviary. This interest has been spurred by occasional sightings of Bald Eagles on the 80-acre lake surrounded by over 1,300 acres of adjacent State land that could potentially attract nesting.

AEF Eagle Consultant and retired TN Endangered Wildlife Coordinator Bob Hatcher has provided the basic material and recent updates of the 3-year old eagle display. The display focuses on the chain of events leading up to Bald Eagle recovery efforts in Tennessee and milestones since. Hatcher and Cecere recently provided on-site consultation concerning completion of the eagle aviary, and AEF has agreed to transfer two non-releasable educational Bald Eagles to Radnor Lake

after the aviary is completed.



Top photo: panoramic view of Aviary Center at Radnor Lake;

Below (Left): Charley Hankla, Lester Turner (Friends of Radnor Lake); Al Cecere, Spencer Williams (American Eagle Foundation); Norm and Debby Miede (Barbara J. Mapp Foundation)

Below (Right): Charley Hankla (Friends of Radnor Lake) and AEF Consultant Bob Hatcher

GET INVOLVED WITH HELPING AEF & EAGLES

Are you on Facebook? If you are, we'd like to ask you to take a moment and click on the link below to [LIKE US](#) on Facebook! We're currently trying to reach 10,000 American Eagle Foundation Facebook followers! This will increase our visibility and allow more people to become supporters of our mission to Keep America's Eagles Flying Strong and Free! That's Button #1 (on the left).

The button in the middle connects with the Bald Eagle Challenger's Facebook page. Challenger wants friends too! Check out his Facebook page by clicking the middle button, and [FRIEND HIM!](#)

Most important of all, the 3rd button - the one on the right - will take you to the [AEF MEMBERSHIP PAGE](#). The lifeblood of any organization is its members. By becoming a member, you help the American Eagle Foundation save and protect our nation's majestic eagles by conducting environmental education, breeding of captive non-releasable Bald Eagle pairs, releasing captive-hatched eaglets into the wild, rehabilitating injured eagles and other birds of prey, and supporting eagle habitat protection.

Membership is available on a number of levels, and there is a special place for you in our family. Won't you please join us in speaking up and caring for eagles? Thank you so much!



**Come visit our eagles at Dollywood's "Eagle Mountain Sanctuary"
Pigeon Forge, TN. March - December 2014!**



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