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**AEF Fall Newsletter 2013**



## Volunteer Chance-of-a-Lifetime Charity Auction Winners



*Joleen Maiden and Carol Caesar experienced life as AEF caregivers!*

Last year, our loyal AEF Eagle Nest Cam Chatters participated in an online auction for a behind-the-scenes volunteer weekend at the American Eagle Foundation. At the end of the fast-and-furious bidding, TWO winners emerged: Carol Caesar and Joleen Maiden. The money raised from this auction helped fund the construction of a new weathering yard for our birds of prey.

The auction prize included the following activities:

- Feeding the Bald Eagle pair Independence and Franklin and other Eagle Mountain Sanctuary residents.
- One-on-one bird handling lessons (Joleen, an experienced rehabber, was in familiar territory).

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- Feeding (and cleaning up after!) several raptors cared for by the AEF.
- Assisting in the preparation of eaglets Destiny and Thunderbird for their release into the wild.
- Pulling the gate rope that released these eaglets.

About the experience, Carol said: "The highlights for me included handling Luci, a Swainson's Hawk, who has a misaligned beak. I weighed her, cut up her food, and fed her. How exciting it was to have a hawk on my arm eating (and 'talking') the whole time! Flying Buzz the Black Vulture was also exciting. What a rush it was to have him take off and land on my arm!

"The candlelight salmon lunch with Challenger was a lot of fun, especially since Al had never done it before, so he didn't know how Challenger would react. Challenger, of course, was a perfect gentleman, and didn't even utter a word while we ate.

"Feeding the eagles at Eagle Mountain was also a fantastic experience. We were thrilled to walk into their world that we see on camera all of the time – it put everything in perspective. Seeing them watching us and waiting for us to leave so they could pick up their food was really neat. I could really feel how dependent they are on AEF, and I am thankful that they have a forever home.

"Going to the hack tower and seeing our 'babies' in person was the most anticipated part of the trip. We got to help measure the eaglet Thunderbird, wrap and unwrap his talons, and watch while the satellite transmitter was put on. What an absolute thrill it was to actually be able to TOUCH one of our eaglets! And, of course, to have the honor of pulling the rope with Mr. Worth Miller, the WWII POW who was being honored, topped it all. What a proud moment it was when Thunderbird flew over us!"

Joleen's best memories echoed those of Carol in many ways - "The salmon dinner with Challenger was so special! Not many can say they have ever done that! And touching one of Frank and Indy's own young was over-the-top special! Made my heart soar!" Joleen was so grateful for the kindness shown by all the staff, especially Laura Cecere-Sterbens, an 'absolutely amazing' person!

Carol and Joleen finished up their trip by participating in the "Eagle Nest Cam" Chatter Reunion, a now-annual event for our many Eagle Nest Cam viewers. A total of 69 people from at least 13 states attended the 2013 Reunion. The time was spent in a blur of fun activities: touring Eagle Mountain Sanctuary, watching the Wings of America Bird Show (where the chatters were special guests), getting a behind-the-scenes visit to the camera control room, stuffing faces with food at Dixie Stampede dinner-show, attending a special Chat auction and barbeque, and being present for the release of Destiny and Thunderbird. Memories were shared by all, and next year we plan to do it all over again!

For those of you who are not yet "Chatters," **[come join the fun!](#)** This is the inside track for everyone who wants to be more involved in the mission of the American Eagle Foundation.



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*A group of "Eagle Nest Cam" Chatters gather for a photo op after touring the off-park AEF facilities*

## Eaglets "Destiny" & "Thunderbird" Released Into Wild



*L-R, Top row: Thunderbird (Patagial tag K3) and Destiny (L3) wait in their Hack Tower compartment, overlooking Douglas Lake prior to their release. The bars are lifted by Joleen Maiden, Carol Caesar, Al Cecere, and Worth Miller. Second Row: Thunderbird and Destiny survey the world into which they are about to enter. Thunderbird, the first to go, flies free!*

It was a banner year for AEF eagle releases (both captive hatched and rehabbed birds). A total of 9 captive-hatched eaglets were released into the wild from the artificial nesting tower (also called a hack tower) on Douglas Lake in East Tennessee! This story is about two of them, Destiny and Thunderbird.

This year, hundreds of thousands of people watched our online "live" streaming video, featuring non-releasable Bald Eagle pair Independence and Franklin. They did not disappoint! Thanks to this wonderful high-definition eagle nest cam, we watched two baby eaglets break out of their shells and grow up before our eyes. [See a recap of the season.](#)

When the eaglets were released into the wild on August 2, the Eagle Nest Cam Chatters were in attendance to see them fly free. WWII POW Veteran Mr. Worth Miller was the guest of honor. His service to our country was recognized at the event with the release of Thunderbird, an eaglet named by Mr. Worth as a tribute to his WWII military unit. [Watch video.](#)

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These two eaglets had been fitted with GPS transmitters, designed to monitor their travels indefinitely. This project was spearheaded by AEF staff member Julia Cecere, who conducted extensive research on selecting and securing all the equipment necessary for such a huge undertaking. In addition, she helped fabricate harnesses for the eaglets, and developed the protocols for collecting data. Julia also provided much of the material for a [section of our website](#) which was developed to track these eagles everywhere they went, and she organized rescue operations to search for the eaglets when the transmitters stopped sending information.

For a while, both transmitters worked perfectly, but not nearly as long as we had hoped. Our last recorded point for Destiny put her in a very good eagle location near water (and therefore, food) close to Cincinnati, Ohio. After the transmitter failed, she was sighted, photographed, and identification-confirmed by Patagial tag L3. Thunderbird (Patagial tag K3) traveled in a straight line to Saginaw Bay off Lake Huron in Michigan. His transmitter's last valid reading was September 15 and placed him in a reed-filled swampy area that extended across acres and acres. He had successfully survived in the wild for over 6 weeks before we lost contact.

Two separate searches by wildlife volunteers failed to locate either Thunderbird or the transmitter.

We aren't sure why the transmitters failed, but we hope to continue tracking other eagles in the coming year! Sadly, only 50% of first-year juvenile eagles survive their first year – whether from a wild nest or released from a hack tower – but we remain hopeful that both these eagles are alive and well.

We urge individuals or groups who may have seen juvenile eagles with Patagial tags L3 or K3 to [let us know](#) – and if you manage to take a photograph, please send that as well.



*Our sincere thanks and appreciation to Mike Baker, an eagle nest cam moderator and zoomer for the AEF-sponsored Northeast Florida Eagle Nest, and to Kyle Bannell, Grant Clarkson, Steve Frisbee, and Sherry Clarkson from the*

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*Chippewa Nature Center in Midland, Michigan—all volunteers who conducted a thorough search for the eagle  
Thunderbird.*

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## Eagles "Challenger" & "Mr. Lincoln" Participate In Field & Stream Store Grand Opening

In August, AEF team members Al Cecere, Laura Sterbens, and Rebecca Krebs traveled to Cranberry Township in Pennsylvania with trained educational eagles Challenger and Mr. Lincoln to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony for the first **Field & Stream** retail store. This store, operated by Dick's Sporting Goods, caters to those who love the outdoors. There were photo ops, and the huge crowd was delighted to see these two majestic creatures that can no longer survive in the wild.



*Al Cecere and Bald Eagle Mr. Lincoln at grand opening of a Field & Stream retail store in Cranberry Township, PA.*

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## High Point University Convocation Features "Mr. Lincoln" Flyover

The AEF team (Al Cecere, Laura Sterbens, Rebecca Krebs, and Christian Knatt) traveled to **High Point University in North Carolina** to participate in the August 18, 2013 Opening Convocation Ceremonies, where faculty members first meet the new group of students for the upcoming year. During a rendition of Josh Groban's *You Raise Me Up*, Mr. Lincoln successfully performed a free flight demonstration.



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*American Eagle Foundation's Bald Eagle Challenger and Laura Cecere Sterbens with High Point University President Nido Qubein at High Point University in High Point, NC (8-18-13); Bald Eagle flyover at High Point Convocation; AEF staff Christian Knatt, Al Cecere, Rebecca Krebs, & Laura Sterbens with Challenger.*

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## Bald Eagle "Challenger" Awes Crowd At Philadelphia Eagles Season Opener



On September 15th, the AEF team (Al Cecere, Laura Sterbens, Julia Cecere, Rob West, and Christian Knatt) were in Philadelphia, PA to attend the Philadelphia Eagles Season Opener against the San Diego Chargers. Challenger awed the crowd as he soared over a field-sized flag for over a minute, held proudly by our servicemen and servicewomen during the presentation of the *Star Spangled Banner*.

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**Watch Video!**

Challenger is currently exercising daily to stay in shape for upcoming events this fall! Football season is in full swing, and he will fly at several games. He will also attend a number of corporate events and make TV appearances.

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**Raising Awareness About Bald Eagles In A Young Generation**

The trip to Philadelphia presented the AEF team with opportunities to help young people learn about and respect Bald Eagles, our natural resources, and our environment. Upon arriving in PA for the Philadelphia Eagles season opener, the AEF staff and eagle Challenger traveled to New Jersey and performed educational programs at Camden Forward School and Gloucester Township Elementary School. This type of program creates a learning experience that stays with students all their lives.



*Principal Joseph W. Gentile, Gloucester Elementary School, elementary student, and Al Cecere with Bald Eagle Challenger. Picture on right: Principal Denise Baker, Camden Forward Elementary School, with Al and Challenger.*

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**Fox and Friends News Provides Platform For Al Cecere To Discuss Effects Of Wind Turbines On Wildlife**

On September 14, 2013, Al Cecere and Bald Eagle Challenger appeared on Fox & Friends News in New York. In this interview, Al talked about the dangers of wind turbines to birds and other wildlife, pointing out that alarming number of Bald and Golden eagles are now being killed by wind farms. In a recent study, it was found that 67 eagles have been killed by wind turbines over the last 5 years, and the number is rising because more and more wind turbines are being built.

Al stated, "In 2004, at Altamont Pass in Central California, there were 116 Golden Eagles killed - over a 25 year period, that's 3,000 eagles! Other species are also at risk - like bats."

Al was asked, "Since it's a federal crime to kill a Bald Eagle, how can this be allowed?" Al explained, "The wind farms are being given a 5-year grace period...and they shouldn't be. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 is the law of the land that applies in this case. To make matters worse, a 20-year extension of the grace period for wind farms is currently being considered by the Federal Government."

He continued, "Wind turbines are a good source of alternative energy, but we need to make them safer for birds and other wildlife."

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[Watch the interview on Fox and Friends.](#)



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### Enjoy the World of Bald Eagles - Watch AEF-Sponsored HD Video Nest Cams

Nesting season is in full swing at a wild Bald Eagle nest in Northeast Florida, and resident eagles Romeo and Juliet are busy with “nestorations” in preparation for egg laying and eaglet raising! The AEF has successfully installed a high-definition cam in the nest tree, along with a second HD cam in an adjacent tree, providing viewers with spectacular glimpses into the private lives of these wild Bald Eagles.



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*"Nestorations" by AEF Chat Moderator, Crystal Slusher*

Our website page views have jumped to never-before-achieved levels since we began the live streaming video of this nest. Be sure to sign in to ["Live Chat"](#) and participate in the conversation as you watch these eagles on our cam page. Our moderators are friendly, knowledgeable, and available from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. every day to answer questions and point out interesting facts about eagles. Easy-to-follow directions are on the [Cam pages](#). It's an opportunity not to be missed! As nest activity increases, so will Chat hours.

Please help the AEF spread the word to those who haven't heard about this amazing nest by sharing our ["ready-to-go" posters](#) on your personal Facebook or other social media pages.

In March, we will also begin live streaming video of our non-releasable captive Bald Eagles, Independence and Franklin, who reside at Eagle Mountain Sanctuary at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, TN. These eagles have successfully [raised many eaglets](#), and their nesting season will begin as the NE Florida Eagle pair is finishing theirs, thereby giving our viewers months and months of exciting viewing!

The aviary where Indy and Frank live was damaged by a bad storm on June 28, 2013. Since then, the eagles (who fortunately were not injured) have been housed together at AEF's off park raptor facility, and are waiting for renovations to be made to their regular aviary at Dollywood. This should be completed by January 1, 2014, just in time for their nesting season to begin.



*Indy and Frank with their babies from 2013 - Destiny and Thunderbird*

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## Al Cecere Among Top 20 Contestants In "EagleRare Award"

Al Cecere, Founder and President of the American Eagle Foundation, has once again made it into the "top 20" for the EagleRare Award. In January 2014, the winner and the finalists will be announced, A \$40,000 Grand Prize Charity Donation will be awarded the winner, and six \$4,000 Prizes will be given to finalists in each of these categories: Courage, Leadership, Survival, Heroism, Devotion, and Character. [Please vote for Al Cecere](#), a "rare eagle" indeed! **You can vote once a day, every day!** Your participation in voting is very much appreciated!



## "Born to Be" Book Signing Held At Dollywood

On October 26, the American Eagle Foundation's Bald Eagle Challenger and Al Cecere joined Singer/Songwriter James Rogers and Sally Moorner at Dollywood for a book signing event to introduce a new children's story book about Challenger, called *Born To Be*. The book was written by Sally Moorner and Al Cecere, and beautifully illustrated by Mike Lambert. Moorner is a retired elementary school teacher and was named "Teacher of the Year" in the state of Virginia a total of 6 times. Rogers wrote and performed two songs for the book. A CD is included with the book, featuring Dolly Parton, who narrates the story, and James Rogers performing the songs. For a full description and to place an order, [click here](#).



*Singer/Songwriter James Rogers: authors Sally Moorner and Al Cecere: and Bald Eagle Challenger*

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## John Douglas Prickett: An Extraordinary AEF Volunteer

Mention the name 'John Douglas Prickett' and everyone smiles. John's talents and willingness to contribute have earned him well-deserved accolades from AEF staff and supporters.

John is a U.S. Army veteran who served from 1964-68 in Germany with the Army Security Agency. Following that, he served a one-year tour in Vietnam, and worked with the NSA and the Department of Defense.

He's a graduate of San José State University, where he majored in English and Comparative Literature.

John has owned his own pool company and a horse ranch in Oregon. He hosted horse clinics at his ranch and rode with a world-renowned

horse clinician in 6 states.

He retired from an Illinois school district and now contributes in a multitude of ways at the American Eagle Foundation. John has volunteered at the AEF for 2 1/2 years, has handled all the birds (except eagles), and his brilliant photography has gifted all of us with wonderful snapshots of these majestic creatures.

John was instrumental in documenting a wild eagle nest outside the Kroger parking lot in Sevierville. You can read more about this (and see his photo from this nest) in our [Spring 2013 e-Newsletter](#).

John states, "I was introduced to AEF by Terry Sherred, a fellow volunteer whom I met at church. As a photographer and an avid birder this was a match made in heaven for me."

Some of his photos are featured in the collage below.



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*AEF Birds: Bald Eagle Challenger, Golden Eagle Tecumseh, Eurasian Eagle Owl Apollo, and Barn Owl Jupiter  
Photos by John Douglas Prickett*

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## Our Wish List - Can You Help?

There are several items - expensive items - we need at the American Eagle Foundation. If you can help fund any of these - and we appreciate any amount you feel comfortable to contribute - please go to our [Donation Page](#) and complete the form on that page. There is a comment box at the bottom where you can specifically state where you would like your donation to be applied. Select from any of the items below, or you can leave it up to us! In addition, you can make your donation "in honor of" or "in memory of" someone special in your life. If you have any questions about any of these items, contact Al Cecere at the American Eagle Foundation: 865-429-0157.

**1. Pontoon Boat.**

We have only a very tiny boat at the moment, and we have to stay in the Cove. We need a bigger boat to get on the main part of Douglas Lake to track our eaglets when they are released.

**2. New Metal Doors On All Interior Eagle Barn Enclosures**

These doors will replace the worn-out interior wooden doors at our off-site facility.

**3. Eagle Cam Expenses**

The initial costs of our high-def cams is very expensive, and beyond that, we need ongoing funding for streaming the video, and for the technical support that ensures a high quality delivery to all our viewers. Next year, we would like to add additional cameras to the site for even better coverage.

**4. Repairs To Hack Tower**

Much-needed repairs and upgrades to our Hack Tower should be completed before our next season of eaglets.

**5. 12 or 15 Passenger Van**

This van is needed to transport non-releasable birds to educational programs.

**Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to the mission of the American Eagle Foundation. We appreciate your loyalty and generosity.**



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