

For Immediate Release

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Rehabilitated American Bald Eagle Returns to the Wild

Charlotte- Carolina Raptor Center (CRC) and the Blue Ridge Wildlife Institute, Inc. (BRWI) of Jonas Ridge, N.C., will release an American bald eagle back into the wild. The release will take place at **11:00 a.m. on Friday, January 24, 2003 at Smithey's Creek Park** located at **W. Kerr Scott Reservoir** in **Wilkes County**. The public is invited to attend.

After eight months of rehabilitation from a compound fracture to the right humerus, the fourteen-month-old eagle is ready for release. After surgery and rehabilitation that included daily exercise, the eagle is able to fully extend its wing and hunt successfully. Volunteer Dr. Rick Beldegreen of Stoney Creek Animal Hospital performed surgery.

"It was a positive sign that the eaglet began eating on his own within the first 48 hours, despite suffering from significant blood loss and serious dehydration," noted Mathias Englemann, CRC's Rehabilitation Coordinator. According to David Allan with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, the population of bald eagles in North Carolina is increasing. In 2002, 60 territories were monitored, 45 of them were active, and 37 nests were successful. A total of 60 young eagles were fledged in N.C. in 2002. Rhonda Adams found the injured juvenile eagle in her garden on June 1, 2002 on Globe Mountain near the headwaters of the John's River. Sandra Justus, a member of BRWI's Transport Team, recovered the eagle and transported it to CRC for evaluation and treatment.

"I really did not think the eagle would make the journey," recalls Justus. "I am thrilled that the eagle survived rehabilitation and is now able to continue its life in the wild." Two adult bald eagles were reported flying in the area very close to the site where the eaglet was found, and there are reports of an active nest in the vicinity.

Terry Ramsey, Operations Manager at W. Kerr Scott Reservoir was elated to hear of the eagle's proposed release. He said, "The Corps of Engineers takes great pride in the fact that W. Kerr

Scott Reservoir was chosen as the site for the release of the rehabilitated eagle. Our staff stands ready to support the effort and plans to have a patrol boat on the water that day should anything go wrong on the water. “ Ramsey indicated that as federal lands, W. Kerr Scott Reservoir offers the eagle some initial protection from hunting and molestation. “Hopefully, the shorelines can provide a resting place for the bird until it becomes acclimated to the wild.”

Justus will say a Native American prayer in English for the young eagle before it is returned to the wild, asking that it be protected and blessed as it continues its journey. Adams and Justus refer to the eagle using the Cherokee Language of Tsalagi: **Aren** (ar-ren), meaning **Eagle** (wo-ha’-li) **Ruler/Chief** (u-gv-wi-yu-hi) **of** (v-hna-i) **Peace** (nv-wa-do-hi-ya-dv).

These words represent how this eagle fought for its life, similar to how eagles in America are making a strong recovery after being listed as endangered and have been moved to the less serious category of threatened.

Founded in 1979, Carolina Raptor Center is dedicated to environmental education and conservation of birds of prey through public education, rehabilitation of injured and orphaned raptors, and research. Last year outreach exhibitions taught more than 120,000 people about raptors and their importance to the environment, “Wild Wings” educated more than 54,000 children in 107 North and South Carolina cities and more than 35,000 people visited CRC. For more information on programs, visit www.birdsofprey.org.

The Blue Ridge Wildlife Institute, Inc. opened its doors in 1995 and became a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in 1997. BRWI is dedicated to stewardship of the earth through environmental education, research, and the rehabilitation of sick, injured, and orphaned native North American wildlife. BRWI annually receives over 600 injured and orphaned wild animals from the 18 county region of Western North Carolina. For more information please visit our website at www.wildcarebr.org.

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Directions:

Traveling US 421 North go approximately 1.5 miles from the intersection of US 421 N and NC 16 N. Look for a brown “Recreation Area” sign on the left. Turn left onto South Minton Road and continue to the end of the road. South Minton Road ends at the park entrance.