

# LTWC returns bald eagle to wild



A bald eagle is released Sunday near Carson Pass. Photo/ DanThriftPhotography.com

By Kathryn Reed

HOPE VALLEY â€” Seconds after she flew from the arms of Wayne McKnight, the young bald eagle was tested when two other raptors raced toward her.

Holding her own, she dove, darted and averted harm. All three bald eagles landed in trees by Red Lake as a crowd of people above them on Highway 88 watched the spectacle.

â€œThatâ€™s a first,â€ said Tom Millham, who with his wife, Cheryl, runs Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe.

His guess is the other eagles may have been showing the rehabbed bird that this was their territory.

The female eagle was about 4 months old when she arrived at LTWC in the summer. It had fallen out of a nest near Lake

Almanor. The nest was so high a tree trimmer could not reach it.

The eagle at 12 pounds is a little heavier than most 8 month olds would be " usually they are 8 to 10 pounds.

"She'll fly and lose some of that baby fat," Millham said.

Trout caught by Lake Tahoe fishermen is what was fed to the eagles, and remaining bear cubs and river otters.

For the last three weeks members of LTWC's eagle team have been exercising the bird in preparation for Sunday's release along the Carson Pass.

This location is used because no matter what direction they take off there is plenty of food " primarily fish. To the east are the Smith and Carson valleys, north is Tahoe, west is the San Joaquin Valley, and Bear Valley is to the south.

LTWC let another baldy go at this location in July. The third bald eagle it had been carrying for was put down because its wing didn't heal and therefore the animal could not survive in the wild.

LT Wildlife Care is all about returning animals to the wild.

McKnight helped with the release of a golden eagle a few years ago, but this was his first experience helping with a bald eagle.

He and Millham entered the bird's cage about 2:30pm. The magnificent animal with its massive wingspan landed on McKnight's heavily gloved forearms. Her eyes and beak were covered for the ride up to her release point.

She is a talker " but a calm bird, according to her handlers.

“It’s respect for the bird that keeps me going,” McKnight said.

McKnight looked like a proud dad letting an offspring into the world.

“See how well she flew,” Millham said “another proud father.”



Wayne McKnight takes the eagle from Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care. Â Â Â Â Photo/Kathryn Reed



Wayne McKnight and Tom Millham prepare for the release. Photo/Kathryn Reed