

# CORNELL UNIVERSITY NEWS

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITHACA, N.Y. - Two golden eagle chicks, hatched through artificial insemination at Cornell University, are waiting until they are strong enough to be released to the wild by ornithologists.

The ornithologists said it is the first time the species has been bred in captivity through artificial insemination. It also will be one of the few times a captive bird of prey will have been released to the wild. Last year Cornell scientists released captive bred kestrels and loggerhead shrikes to the wild, but these were obtained through natural matings, not artificial insemination.

James W. Grier, a graduate student who headed the eagle research project, said previous attempts to pair the adult golden eagles through natural mating were not successful, resulting in the decision to use artificial insemination.

In artificial insemination, semen from a male is obtained and injected into a female with a syringe. The female's eggs thus fertilized were removed and placed in an incubator at the Poultry Science Department of the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell.

One of the seven fertile eggs was left under the female at the Cornell Behavioral Ecology Building where several species of birds of prey are being bred in captivity. The egg was left under the female eagle so she could incubate and raise a young one and thus complete her breeding cycle.

The first eaglet was hatched on May 11 and weighed three and a half ounces. The second was hatched on May 13. The others are expected to hatch at regular intervals with the seventh expected on May 31. The baby eaglets, fluffy whitish little creatures with big beaks, are fed chunks of meat from rats, rabbits, woodchucks and other animals.

Two of the baby eagles will be retained in captivity for future research. All the remaining chicks will be released to the wild. All but one of them will be fostered out to wild eyries at an early age so they will be accepted by the wild adult. If this is done early enough, Grier said, the adult eagles will accept the young.

(more)

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An eaglet hatched at Cornell's ecology building will be released at the end of this summer without the use of wild foster parents.

"Golden eagles are not an endangered species," Grier said, "although they have suffered heavy losses recently due to irresponsible and illegal shootings and poisonings. We do not need to release the golden eagles to the wild to help maintain wild populations. However, the experience gained and techniques learned by this project will improve the chance of future success with species which do need help."

The adult birds used at Cornell were on temporary loan from Lou Gaeta of Cleveland, Ohio; Martin Schweig of St. Louis, Mo., and Frances Hamerstrom of Plainfield, Wisc.

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