

## Team working to mend bald eagle's broken wing

### Air station paralegal aids with rescue

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By Paul C. Leibe  
Staff Writer

It was the afternoon of New Year's Eve. Danielle Trigger looked out at the back yard of her St. Leonard home and spotted a large bird, sitting on the ground.

After a while, when the animal made no attempt to fly away, Trigger called local authorities who suggested she contact Donna and David Quinn, animal rescue workers living in Broomes Island.

The Quinns work with St. Mary's County resident Mary Martin, who has a federal migratory bird rehabilitation permit.

Martin, who works as a paralegal specialist in Patuxent River Naval Air Station's Legal Assistance Office, operates the Back to the Wild Rescue and Rehab facility on St. Andrew's Church Road with her partner, Matthew Wilkes.

The bird in Trigger's yard was a young male bald eagle — only a year or so old — not yet mature enough to display the white feathers on its head that make the breed identifiable. It was injured and unable to fly. The bird was dehydrated and going into shock.

The Quinns picked up the eagle, carried it to their home and called Martin. Wilkes and John Fischer picked up the bird at the Quinn home and carried it back to Martin's rescue facility. "We conducted a thorough exam," said Martin, "and discovered broken bones in the area of [the bird's] left shoulder." The injuries, she believes, may have occurred when the eagle struck a power line while in flight.

Martin, Wilkes and Fischer immobilized the eagle's wing by wrapping it. They then secured the wing to the bird's body to prevent further injury.

Because of the holiday weekend, Martin wasn't able to reach anyone at any of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife offices in the region, or anyone at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, to notify authorities of the rescue.

They did, however, get in touch with Gerda Deterer at Wildlife Rescue Inc., in Hampstead in Carroll County, who has experience caring for bald eagles. Deterer gave Martin additional information about caring for the bird and agreed to examine it, if they could bring the bird to her.

On New Year's Day, Martin and Wilkes carried the injured eagle to Hampstead. They stayed with the bird through the day, assisting Deterer with her work. "Within hours," Martin said, "the bird was much more alert and aggressive, and began eating with a healthy appetite."

The following morning Martin reached the Maryland Department of Natural Resources office in Annapolis, which authorized Deterer's facility to care for the bird until it could be transported to Dr. Donald Zantop's



*Photos Courtesy of Mary Martin*

At the Back to the Wild Rescue and Rehab facility on St. Andrew's Church Road, John Fischer, left, and Matthew Wilkes do an initial examination on an injured bald eagle. The bird, which had a broken wing, was found in a yard in St. Leonard on New Year's Eve and was brought to St. Mary's for emergency care until it could be taken to a veterinarian.

veterinary clinic in Fallston. Zantop specializes in the care of birds and a week later, on Jan. 8, he performed surgery to repair the eagle's injuries.

"He had a fractured bone" in his wing, said Zantop, "just below his shoulder." Zantop mended the broken bone with "a number of pins" during the hour-long procedure. Zantop said this was the first time he's done this type of operation on a bald eagle, but added that the injury is common in birds.

The bird came through the surgery with flying colors, said Martin, and was returned to the Hampstead facility the following day to recuperate. The eagle is scheduled for regular checkups in the coming weeks and months. "I see him once a week," said Zantop. "I saw him [on Tuesday] and he's doing fine." But, he added, the eagle's recovery will take several months.

"We take him to the vet's every Monday," said Deterer, "and he stays overnight. He gets an exam, X-rays and blood work, and I pick him up on Tuesday. He's doing quite well."

At Deterer's facility, the eagle lives in a small barn. "We don't want him to be in a cage," she said, "and in the barn everything is padded. There's nothing there that can hurt him."

Once the eagle's bones have healed, workers will start giving the bird physical therapy.

"His wings have to be spread to exercise the muscles," explained Martin, "and he has to learn flying all over again."

"We've had many of these cases with bald eagles this year. Most of them," she said, "either died on their own or had to be euthanized — a tremendous number from hitting power lines. It's nice when we get one in time and he has a chance."

Should the eagle make a full recovery, it will be brought back to Southern Maryland to be released back to the wild.

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Still too young to have its signature white feathers on its head, this year-old bald eagle recently broke its left wing. Rescue workers from Calvert, St. Mary's and Carroll counties spent parts of their New Year's