

IHOP

Recently our neighbor Glen (Buzz Saw) called and reported that he had an adult Eagle sitting in his front yard and that it was acting like it was hurt. Doing the best sneak job I could muster and using large trees to conceal my approach I got to within about 50 feet of the Eagle, peeking out from around the last tree the Eagle was looking directly at me. I guess my stealthy approach was noticed from the beginning but to my surprise the Eagle just looked at me and made no effort to fly. I circled around and joined Buzz Saw on his deck watching the bird.

The majority of the time it would just lay on its side and occasionally try to stand up and hop around. Most healthy eagles would have flown away long before now so this had to be the injured Eagle that others on the lake had been reporting and its behavior was unlike any of the many Bald Eagles that we have on our lake.

I called the Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota and a short time after leaving a message about our situation they contacted me and said that a representative from the raptor center would be getting in touch with us. Rubin, a volunteer with the raptor center living in Franconia, Minnesota, called and after relating to him our story and location he said he would be out in about an hour.

My wife, Lorraine and I joined Buzz Saw on his deck watching IHOP and waiting for Rubin's arrival. I proposed that the most embarrassing thing that could happen is that just before his arrival the Eagle would fly off. Well, guess what, five minutes before Rubin arrived the Eagle took off and perched high up in a nearby tree.



IHOP sitting in our yard



Rubin and Geezer Bob, plotting

As Rubin and company watched, the Eagle swooped down and with one leg partially hanging down glided over to our yard and landed on the grass about 300 feet away. Now after we relocated and standing about 50 feet away from the Eagle, Rubin felt that it was worth a try to capture him. "What do you say, do you want to give it a try?" Rubin asked me. "Sure count me in," I excitedly responded. Rubin gave me a small white towel and told me to "Move around in front of him and keep his attention and I'll sneak up from behind and try to net him."

My job was to cover the Eagle's eyes after Rubin netted him and then he would secure the talons. It did not escape my attention that while Rubin had on a pair of thick welding gloves that went up to his elbows all I had was my bare hands and this little white towel.

The Eagle was not fooled by our plan and took off after we moved only a few feet and perched back up in a tree. Rubin suggested that we call off our attempt to capture the bird and see what the future brings. He indicated that for our Eagle with a potential injury to the leg, infection may be the greatest danger and the prognosis may not be all that good.

Eventually the Eagle would be given the name IHOP for the way it was moving around on the ground.

IHOP was captured 3 weeks later by Rubin and lake resident Jim Widen. I asked Jim to write up his story about the capture. His story follows:

The Eagle rescue attempt took place the morning of July 29th off the west side of Bald Eagle Island. I was out fishing Friday morning and noticed an eagle on the shore. I thought maybe that was the eagle that you emailed people on the lake about that was injured. I got about 20 yards from him and the eagle sat quietly not moving and wasn't frightened by my presence. So, I stopped fishing and stopped by your lake home only to learn that you were out of town for the weekend. But Lorraine was so kind to get me the name and phone number of the volunteer from the raptor center.

So, I decided to go back home and pick up my wife Kathie and go back out to the island and see if the eagle was still there and it was. I then called, on my cell phone, Rubin the volunteer and told him the story. He then got permission from the raptor center to come out to Bone Lake and attempt the rescue of the eagle. He arrived about an hour later and we got on board our pontoon and headed back to the island. When we got there the eagle was no longer at the same spot. Rubin suggested that we walk around and see if the eagle was still on the ground some where, and sure enough he was about 30 yards back from where I originally saw him. Rubin was armed with a big net and leather gloves and said, "Jim you just stand there". Rubin took off running and caught him in his first swing of the net. We then immediately returned to our lake home put the eagle in a crate and then Rubin left to deliver the eagle to the Raptor Center.

Before leaving Rubin left us with the phone numbers and information to use when calling the Raptor Center to check on the Bone Lake eagle but since it was Friday he told us to wait until Monday or Tuesday of the following week. We did call back on Tuesday and learned the sad news that he did not make it through the night. We were very hopeful that the eagle could have been return to Bone Lake, it was a great experience but it had a sad ending.



Jim Widen and Ruben holding IHOP