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HOT BIRDS

Many of these images are available on line at <<http://massbird.org/>>

POCKET PLACES

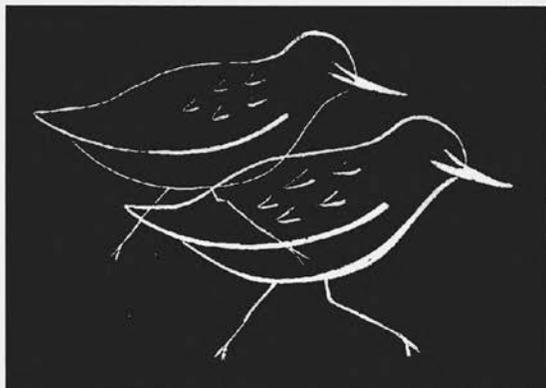
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AT A GLANCE

Wayne R. Petersen

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COVER ART BY MUD HEN

News from MassWildlife

Since 1989 bald eagles have occupied a nesting territory at Barton Cove on the Connecticut River, centered on an island between the towns of Gill and Montague. A total of 18 eagle chicks have been produced at the site, making it one of the most productive nesting areas in the Commonwealth. In recent years, the nesting season successes and failures have been shared with local residents via Eagle Cam, a remote camera fixed above the nest which transmits video to the local cable television access network. Eagle Cam images have also been enjoyed by people around the world as Northeast Utilities, an Eagle Cam partner with MassWildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, posts images on their corporate website at www.nu.com.

The eagles have used three different nesting trees over the years, showing preference for a tall, conspicuous, but very dead, white pine. MassWildlife and Northeast Utilities tree climbers have discontinued the practice of climbing the pine for either banding eagle chicks or servicing the Eagle Cam, as the tree is unsafe. Bob Perry and staff from Northeast Utilities' Northfield Mountain Environmental Center rigged stabilizing lines to the trunk of the tree prior to the 2002 nesting season. Eagle Cam partners and viewers alike feared the tree could fail anytime during the April through July period when eagle eggs and young chicks are dependent on the nest. Fortunately, both the lines and tree held up, with the eagles fledging two healthy chicks from the nest in 2002.

Now, with the nesting season over and the eagles no longer a fixture in the area, MassWildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have decided to remove two of the three supporting lines, allowing nature to take its course with the tree during the upcoming winter. One line was left to guide the tree away from the photovoltaic panel, which provides electricity for the camera and transmitter, should the tree fall. Biologists believe that if the unstable tree topples or the nest collapses during the winter of 2002-'03, the eagles will move to one of their two other established nests within the territory, both in live trees. Eagle Cam II has already been positioned above one of the alternate nests in anticipation of a switch, and MassWildlife climbers will enhance the alternate nest sites by pruning branches in the eagles' flight path and reinforcing supporting limbs under the nests. Should the dead pine survive the winter, the stabilizing lines will be reattached in the event the birds return to use the nest. Local eagle watchers and Internet eagle fans will then keep their fingers crossed, hoping the nest, tree and any eaglets produced survive one more nesting season.

