

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

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PREPARING FOR FUTURE RAPTOR MONITORING PROGRAMS

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As part of the planning for such future initiatives as Supersonic flight training by domestic and foreign air forces, the IEMR is preparing for the related Environmental Effects Monitoring (EEM) programs. Pending approval by DND, other appropriate Federal and Provincial authorities and in consultation with other stakeholders; such activities could be permitted at approved altitudes along specific routes and/or in designated areas, or air ranges. In 2005, the IEMR initiated a series of surveys for active nests of Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) (Minaskuat 2005), considered as Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs) in Labrador (DND 1994). The objective of the 2005 program was to re-examine known, and search for new, raptor nests in areas of suitable habitat to identify possible locations for future EEM research. Each nest was assessed in terms of breeding status, condition, accessibility by helicopter and observer vantage locations.

Consistent with previous surveys, a Bell 206 Long Ranger helicopter was used to conduct aerial surveys, with one navigator/observer and two rear-seat observers, plus the pilot. Areas of suitable habitat (e.g., cliff habitat) were surveyed over an approximate 5 day period throughout the current Low-level Training Area (CYA 731).

Three active Golden Eagle nests (Figure 1), in addition to two other suspected/unconfirmed nests, and nine active Bald Eagle nests were located.

In October 2005, the Study Team returned to construct observation blinds at two of the active Golden Eagle nest locations, with a third established at a site known to have been repeatedly occupied in previous years. Given the ease of accessibility at the Bald Eagle nests, blinds were not constructed as they can be easily erected with minimal



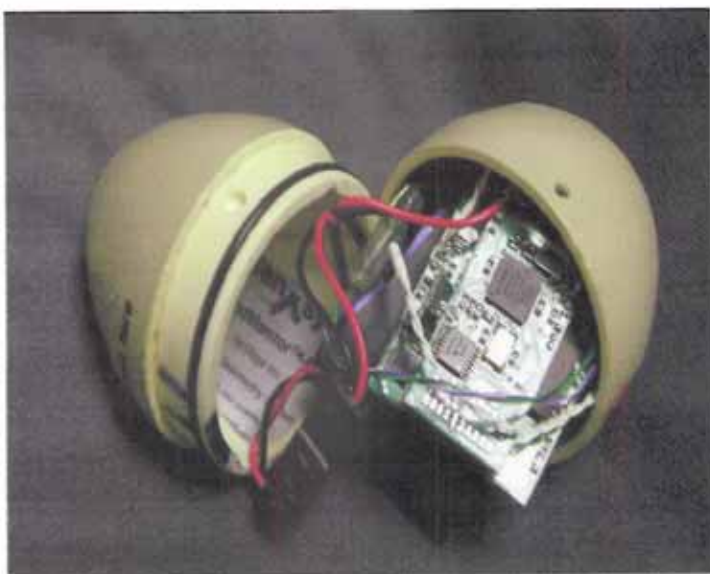
Golden Eagle Nest Site

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disturbance, prior to monitoring once active nests have been confirmed. It is envisaged that the IEMR will be able to return to these nests to collect baseline (i.e., without disturbance) observations of nesting Eagles, in anticipation of future EEM studies related to the potential effects of aircraft disturbance (e.g., noise and visual disturbance), in particular supersonic.



Egg-shaped Nest Monitor

A successful EEM program is one in which the researchers are able to accurately describe both the cause (whether it be noise, visual, or other physical effect from a human activity for example) and the effect on the species (usually causing a behavioural, physiological, and/or reproductive response). Typically, EEM programs with birds in Labrador have been designed to investigate whether aircraft events influenced either:

- A) incubation (or brooding), with eggs (or nestlings) exposed to extreme weather; or
- B) the nest site to be temporarily undefended and therefore susceptible to predators or other threats (e.g. wind).

Observers have estimated noise levels at the nest by using Sound Level Meters located at a blind, some distance away. However, as part of the 2006 field program, researchers plan to examine the effectiveness

of an egg-shaped NestMonitor™ device currently being developed by TenXsys Inc., in consultation with IEMR. These devices provide new tools for field researchers in the area of EEM and wildlife reactions related to human disturbance and noise events, such as aircraft overflights.

The NestMonitor™ is suitable for placement in birds' nests to measure aspects of environmental conditions that previously were estimated. Specifically, this device is capable of capturing and storing noise level and noise events, temperature and motion, or can be programmed to monitor heart rate. As this technology is under development, it is proposed to also test the monitors in combination with visual observations. To this end, it is proposed to work with previously identified Bald Eagle nests (and/or Osprey nests, depending on availability of active nest sites) that are accessible (on rocks) in the Churchill Falls area. The primary objectives of this monitoring program are:

1. to directly measure noise dosage and temperatures at the nest during incubation;
2. to observe the behaviour of nesting Bald Eagle and/or Osprey in response to the egg monitor;
3. to determine whether a response to a disturbance (e.g., flushing) can be detected by the NestMonitor™, using field observations to measure accuracy; and
4. to examine the effectiveness of these devices in future EEM studies involving avifauna in the air ranges at 5 Wing.

Each of the proposed field programs will consist of two two-day monitoring periods during the early and late incubation period of the species in question. Observers will be positioned at the nest and be equipped with a digital video camera, binoculars and/or spotting scope, thermometer and hand-held SLM. Data collected by the sound level meters and thermometers, in combination with behavioural observations, will allow IEMR to test the effectiveness of the NestMonitor™. This will aid the assessment of the overall effectiveness of this device.

IT'S OFFICIAL! NUNATSIAVUT GOVERNMENT SIGNALS A NEW ERA

Reprinted with permission from Nunatsiavut Government

It's unlikely that Labrador Inuit will ever forget December 1, 2005. During a historic and emotional day of ceremony at the Jens Haven School gym in Nain, the government of Nunatsiavut – "our beautiful land" – came into being. The last ever meeting of the Board of the Labrador Inuit Association passed a resolution declaring the Labrador Inuit Constitution in effect. Soon after, LIA's directors were sworn in as Ministers of the new Transitional Nunatsiavut Assembly.

LIA President William Andersen III became Transitional President of Nunatsiavut. "I am very honoured to have been the one to become the first president of Nunatsiavut," he said. "I was the one who started the process of land claims and I thought it was fitting that I closed it."



Joining President Andersen in the new 18-person House of Assembly were Transitional First Minister Tony Andersen; Health, Education, Social and Economic Development Minister Ben Ponniuk; Finance and Human Resources Minister and Treasurer Gary Baikie; and Environment, Land and Resources Minister Zippie Nochasak.

The events in Nain were webcast so that people in the Labrador Inuit communities of Hopedale, Postville, Rigolet, Makkovik, as well as Inuit in North West River, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, St. John's and Ottawa, could watch while they took part in their own celebrations. Many people watched on computers in their homes and offices.

Premier Danny Williams; Deputy Premier and Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs Tom Rideout; Senator William Rompkey; Environment and Conservation Minister Tom Osborne; and Labrador Affairs Minister Paul Shelley watched the webcast from the Royal Canadian Legion in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The provincial and federal officials had been on their way to Nain but weather held them up in Goose Bay. Also watching the webcast from the Legion were Opposition leaders Gerry Reid and Jack Harris, along with Labrador MHAs John Hickey, Randy Collins and Wally Andersen, an Inuk whose district includes the land claims area. Special guests in Nain included past presidents and vice presidents of LIA, representatives of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Parks Canada, the RCMP, and Aboriginal leaders.

LIA's final meeting was opened with prayers from Simone Kohlmeister, a youth from Nain, and Boas Jararuse, an Elder and past Vice President. Boas is also a relocatee from Hebron now living in Makkovik. After LIA's meeting adjourned, the Nunatsiavut Drum Dancers and Throat Singers performed. Choirs from Nain and Hopedale sang the Canadian and Nunatsiavut anthems. While Inuit government officials, youth and elders watched from the gallery, RCMP officer Troy Lightfoot laid the Canadian flag, Past LIA Board Member and elder from Happy Valley-Goose Bay Ronald Lyall laid the provincial flag and the Rising Youth Council member Debbie Angnatok laid the Nunatsiavut flag.



Toby Andersen, Deputy Minister Nunatsiavut Affairs
Prepares bills for introduction in the first Nunatsiavut Assembly

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NUNATSIAVUT GOVERNMENT SIGNALS A NEW ERA

The historic First Session of the Transitional Nunatsiavut Assembly then opened with President William Andersen III declaring the Assembly in session. Nunatsiavut Government business began in earnest with the introduction of bills for the Assembly, Nunatsiavut Lands, the Nunatsiavut Constitution, and the Nunatsiavut Civil Service. The Assembly elected Ruth Flowers as its first speaker. Ruth is from Hopedale, the community which will serve as centre of Nunatsiavut Government once an Assembly building is constructed.

There was break in the legislative process as the Assembly unanimously agreed with President Andersen's proposal to invite ITK representative Natan Obed to speak. Premier Williams and Senator Rompkey were invited to



Natan Obed makes the very first address to the Nunatsiavut Assembly on behalf of ITK (Inuit Tapirit Kanatami)

make their addresses by videoconference. Although it is rare for heads of other governments to be invited to address legislative assemblies, the Nunatsiavut Government wanted to acknowledge continuing partnerships. "We're a brand new government," President Andersen said, "and we'll rely on advice from the provincial government."

Premier Williams congratulated the Labrador Inuit. "It's a day of tremendous excitement," he said. "This is the beginning of a new era for Labrador Inuit in the region and the province as a whole." The Premier went on to say he was proud of the productive working relationship he enjoyed with the Labrador Inuit. After Premier Williams' address, Senator Rompkey addressed the Assembly on behalf of Canada.

President Andersen said that, although December 1 was a landmark achievement making Labrador Inuit self-government a constitutional and legal reality, it is in many ways part of an ongoing process. "There's a lot of work ahead of us," he said. Moving from a transitional government to a fully elected Assembly will be one of the most important tasks facing the Nunatsiavut Government. "As a transitional government, we have to ensure we plan correctly for the election," President Andersen added.

In co-operation with the provincial and federal governments, Nunatsiavut Government, which now represents 5,300 Labrador Inuit and Kablunângajuit, will begin to take greater control of policy areas such as health, justice, education and the environment. President Andersen acknowledged that this is a great responsibility. "Now we can start controlling our own lives," he said. "It's the start of a government, not a political organization. We will begin implementing what we need."

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Premier Darryl Williams and Senator William Rompkey address the gathering in Nain via teleconference from the Labrador Health Centre

Research Highlights

Information for this issue of Research Highlights was compiled by Institute Staff. If you have any comments or if you have information you would like to see included, please contact the Institute's Office.