

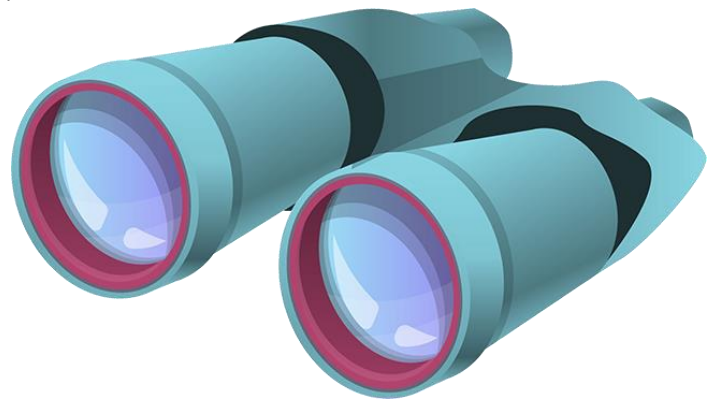
exhausted binoculars juvenile
conceived procession refuge

Saving Thor

“Are those seagulls?” Zeke asked, pointing to the top of the dikes.

Rania stopped pedaling and took her binoculars out of her backpack. “Not gulls. I’m not sure what they are, but they’re pretty big. Maybe hawks? You take a look.”

Zeke examined the birds through the binoculars. “They’re young bald eagles, called juveniles. They don’t get the white head feathers until they’re adults.”



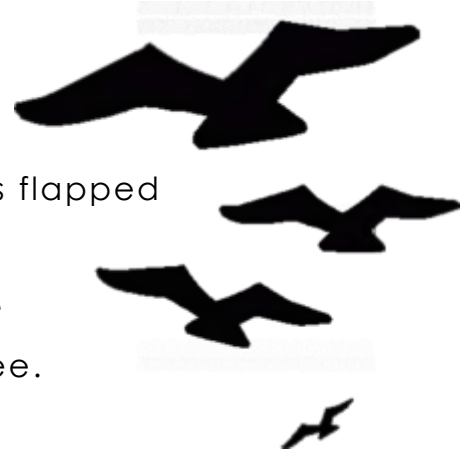
As they watched, the two brown birds paced around on top of a cluster of boulders. Finally, they flew off, landing at the top of a dead tree overlooking the bay.

Zeke and Rania pushed their bikes to the top of the dike, and then looked down into the marsh grass. “Look!” Zeke cried. “There’s another juvenile, and it looks like he is stuck.”

As they got closer, they could see frayed yellow rope wrapped around one of the young eagle’s legs, and it appeared as if the rope was caught between two massive boulders.

"That's so sad," Rania said. "His friends are probably trying to help him."

Farther along the dike, the other two eagles flapped away from the dead tree they had been perched on, squawking and circling, before coming back to roost again on the same tree.



The stuck eagle looked up at them with eyes that did not look like fierce, eagle eyes. They looked defeated and exhausted.

"What's that place called where they rescue wild animals?" Zeke asked. "I saw a video of them rescuing an injured owl."

"Wildlife Refuge," Rania said. She dug her phone out of her backpack. After several rings, someone answered. "Wildlife Refuge. How may I help you?"

"We're out on the dikes near Canning, and I think we found a juvenile bald eagle," Rania said. "He has rope wrapped around one leg, and the rope is trapped between some rocks."

Rania answered a few questions and hung up. "Somebody will be here within the hour. Guess we'll wait and keep this guy company. Let's give him a name. How about Thorondor, like in *The Lord of the Rings*?"

Zeke shrugged. "How about just Thor, like in the comics?"

"Sure," Rania said, looking sadly at the eagle. "Hey, Thor. Hang in there, buddy. Help is coming."

The eagle blinked, then launched himself into the air, only to have the rope pull him down, crashing back onto the rocks. The other eagles squawked.

“Oh my goodness, is he OK?” Rania asked. The teenagers were really worried that the eagle was going to hurt himself before the wildlife refuge people arrived. They looked around for help, but nobody was in sight. Rania kept talking to the eagle, telling him to be calm, but she knew he didn't understand.

It grew very quiet, and time seemed to be moving very slowly as they waited. Suddenly, Thor once again tried to join his friends, and once again was pulled back to the rock with a horrible sounding thud.

Zeke started to pull his shoes off. “I'm going to go down there and free him. All I have to do is pull the rope out from between those rocks, then Thor can fly away,” said Zeke.

Rania knew immediately that that was a remarkably poorly conceived idea. Zeke's intentions were good, but his plan was bad. She looked flatly at Zeke and chose her words carefully. “Zeke, if you climb down to those rocks, Thor isn't going to understand that you are coming to help him. He is going to be really scared. He'll probably hurt himself even worse, trying to get away from you. And if you get close, do you think Thor is just going to sit there and let you tug on the rope? Look at his beak and his claws. He is a wild animal. He's going to defend himself.”



Just then Thor let out another screechy, troubled squawk.

“We can’t just sit here and not do anything. Look at him,” Zeke replied, undecided on what to do, as he hesitated for a moment and then continued to pull off his second shoe.

A low rumbling made them look toward the entrance to the dike road. Both teenagers were relieved to see a truck pull up next to their bikes. Zeke pulled his shoes back on.

A man and a woman got out, carrying what looked like a big dog crate. “Thanks for calling us,” the woman said. “I’m Martha, and this is Ralph. Where is the little guy?”



“Thor,” Rania said, pointing. “That’s what we named him.”

Ralph smiled. “Perfect strong name for such a majestic creature.”

Martha and Ralph approached Thor cautiously, but the eagle barely moved, even as they got close to him.

“He looks exhausted,” Martha said. “He may have been stuck here for quite some time.” She held a blanket above Thor while Ralph cut the rope, and then together, they bundled the eagle up and carried him to the truck, gently placing him in the crate.

“Will he be okay?” Zeke asked.

“He doesn’t seem to be injured,” Ralph said. “But if he’s been stuck for a while, he’s probably pretty hungry. Don’t worry, we’ll get him fixed up in no time.”

Zeke pointed to the other two eagles, watching from a distance. “We think those are his friends, or maybe siblings. When we showed up, they were trying to help him.”

Ralph nodded, and he and Martha started to climb into their truck. “Thank you so much,” Rania said through the open windows.

“No,” Martha said. “Thank you for calling us. The two of you probably saved that eagle’s life. Give us a call at the center in a few days, and we can let you know when Thor is ready to be released, and you can come and watch, if you like.”

“Really?” Zeke said. “That would be awesome. I’d love to see him flying.”



The other two eagles flew after the truck as Zeke and Rania got back on their bikes. “Do you think they’ll follow the truck all the way to the Center?” Zeke asked.

“Maybe,” replied Martha. “Maybe they will show up when Thor gets released. That would be way-cool.”

“Maybe the eagles will bring us some medals for saving their friend,” said Zeke, imagining a procession of bald eagles saluting him and Martha.

Saving Thor (exercises)

1. Short Answer

What are young bald eagles called?

What kind of noise do eagles make?

What book is the name *Thorondor* from?

2. Rania gave 2 reasons why it would be a bad idea for Zeke to try to rescue the eagle himself. What were they? Can you think of a 3rd reason?

a.

b.

c.

3. Write a paragraph describing the rescue from Thor's point of view.

Saving Thor (answers)

1. Short Answer

What are young bald eagles called?

Juveniles.

What kind of noise do eagles make?

Squawk.

What book is the name *Thorondor* from?

The Lord of the Rings.

2. Rania gave 2 reasons why it would be a bad idea for Zeke to try to rescue the eagle himself. What were they? Can you think of a 3rd reason?

a. The eagle will get scared and might hurt himself even worse trying to get away from Zeke.

b. The eagle will defend himself and might hurt Zeke.

c. Answers may vary.

3. Write a paragraph describing the rescue from Thor's point of view.

Answers may vary.