

*excerpt from*  
*Alone Again, Naturally*

*By Evelyn McDonnell 2009*

First you go out on a limb, then you fly. The last few days, the biggest chick has been hopping further and further out of the nest. It goes one yard, then two, then three, up a branch -- then jumps back to the nest, wings spread. Eventually, its siblings follow, but they are more tentative. The fledgling is not a patient teacher; it's eager to go off on its own and soon leaves its nest-mates behind.

On my last day at Dan's (Cabin), the young hawk flies to the next tree. I'll never forget the thrill of seeing that first awkward soar. It continues its hopping and short flights, from one branch and tree to another, until it's out of sight in the thick canopy. Like any parent watching their nest empty, I'm happy and sad. It's time for me to go as well.