



Tales From Along the Trail...

Winter: Prime Time for Eagle Spotting
with Naturalist Cathy Ricks



Winter is the perfect time to view bald eagles in Ohio with leaves on the ground and the trees bare. A record number of eagles and a whopping 707 nests were counted last spring! A bald eagle was recently seen perching above the Kent Parks' office, having helped himself to one of our famous black squirrels. Opportunistic feeders, eagles often take a lesson from the vultures' playbook and dine at the "Roadkill Café." Perching above open lake or river corridors to fish, they scan for their quarry or another predator to steal from. Eagles dive-bomb the water for prey, use their vise-grip talons to land their "catch" and powerful wings to lift it back into the sky. Winter is nesting season too, so look up! The bare trees make spotting the massive nests easier. The Cuyahoga Valley National Park shares some clues for eagle eyed spotters: "Nests are located in large trees 50 to 100 feet above the ground and close to water, where the eagles can find ample fish. Eagles will use an existing nest, adding to it until it is an average of three to five feet across and three to six feet deep. It is lined with grass, moss, and sometimes cattails. Some eagle nests can weigh as much as a ton." They are much larger than the round, leafy squirrel nests commonly seen this time of year around Kent.



ODNR



Brad Bolton



ODNR



Eagles can be seen carrying sticks to refurbish their nest, where 1-3 eggs are laid in February through March and kept warm by both parents.

Young eagles will stay in the nest for about 3 months, giving you even more time for watching the family interact. ODNR is looking for reports of active nests so please contact them if you see one! Kent's Brad

Bolton (ODNR eagle monitor)

spent many frigid days recording information on one of Lake Rockwell's pairs in 1999. The nesting female eagle was killed (probably by a car) leaving the male to incubate the eggs on his own in cold March weather. A daring, early morning rescue was planned with a climber scaling the tree (in 7 minutes), bringing down the still warm eggs and placing them in an incubator.

All three eggs were hatched and then successfully placed in other nests. Brad and the climber had time for some interesting observations. The nest was cluttered with about 50 musk turtles' shells with more at the tree's base. Musk turtles (also known as "stinkpots" for their foul protective odor) were on the Rockwell eagles' favorite "carry up" menu.



Brad Bolton



In the late 70s there were only 4 nesting pairs of bald eagles in Ohio. Last year we had 8 nesting pairs in Portage County and 707 in Ohio. I asked several area naturalists to share where their favorite eagle spotting areas are. While you might not see an eagle, it will feel great to be discovering your own "tales along the trails" in winter.

Favorite Eagle spotting areas recommended by naturalists:

- "Cuyahoga River watershed, Lake Rockwell, Twin Lakes, La Due Reservoir, Mosquito Lake, Sandy Lake and wherever they see them!"
- "Trail Lake Park - The eagle visits frequently, but we have not located a nest on the property. I usually see it in the early morning or afternoon and it often perches in the evergreens along the south lake shore."
- "Lake Phippen - I have seen eagles often from various points along the Lakeside Trail at Towners Woods."
- "Berlin Lake Trail - Best viewing opportunities are from the bridge."
- "Lake Hodgson - I frequently observe the eagles hunting on the lake."
- "[Headwaters Trail](#) near Mantua entrance - Eagle Nest on South side"
- "[Walborn Reservoir \(Stark County\)](#) - The eagle nest can be viewed from the observation area."
- "[Tinkers Creek](#) - The eagle nest can be viewed from the observation platform."
- "[Mentor Marsh](#)"
- "[Cuyahoga Valley National Park](#)"
- "[Wingfoot Lake](#) has an active nest by the blimp hanger!"
- "[Ottawa Wildlife Refuge & Magee Marsh](#) for the largest concentration of eagles"
- "[Lake County Metroparks](#)"
- "Portage Lakes (specifically, the North Reservoir parking access on Portage Lakes Drive) is a great place to visit to watch all sorts of water-loving birds including bald eagles. We have a nest across the road on Long Lake but eagles love fishing the whole system and soaring around the area."

[Reporting an active nest site here!](#) Help Discover All of Ohio's Bald Eagle Nests

Happy Tales, Cathy Ricks