

EagleWatch Etiquette

Bald eagles can be very sensitive to human behavior. Human presence can stress the birds and negatively affect their breeding success. The energy they use to avoid human disturbances is no longer available for other uses during the nesting season. Repeat disturbances can cause problems for the eagle including nest abandonment.

Some eagles are more tolerant of humans than others. For example, eagles in cell towers located in busy places have become more accustomed to humans. That being said, their towers can exceed heights of 200 feet, so they have built in more space between themselves and people. Where eagles are found in forests, they do not encounter humans often and our presence disturbs them more.

For the safest and least intrusive viewing experience, please follow these guidelines when observing or photographing nesting eagles:

1. Use binoculars or a spotting scope. Don't try to get "just a little bit closer."
2. Photographers should use a telephoto lens.
3. Do not stand directly under an eagle nest or in close view of the nest!
4. FWC guidelines advise you to stay at least 330 feet away from any nest (the length of a football field).
5. Use your car or a tree as a blind putting it between you and the eagles. They are less sensitive to those objects than a free-standing or moving human.
6. Try to be at the EagleWatch site with your binoculars between dawn and 11 a.m. The early-riser may be treated to the vocalizations of feeding bald eagles.
7. Respect the landowners. Always ask permission before entering private property. Don't trespass or intrude in any way. Heed all No Trespassing signs.
8. If an eagle stops what it is doing to watch you, you are disturbing the eagle—move on!
9. Don't EVER do anything to try and make the bird fly. Flushing an eagle can cause harm to the nestlings. Besides it is considered harassment.
10. Be as quiet as possible.
11. If you see an eagle, consider yourself lucky. Don't do anything that might stress the bird. They will see you. Move slowly and carefully and keep your gestures restrained.
12. Do not ever feed the eagles.
13. If an eagle is on the ground, do not approach it. When it flies off, do not attempt to follow it.
14. Demonstrate eagle friendly actions by your own behavior. Be courteous to both other eagle observers and wildlife.
15. Keep the area free from litter. Pick up after yourself and take your trash with you.
16. Keep pets at home.

For your comfort:

1. Wear appropriate outdoor clothing, sturdy footgear and avoid brightly colored clothing
2. Bring sunglasses, sun block, bug spray and water.
3. Find a comfortable place to observe the eagles.

For your safety:

1. Keep an eye out for other birds and wildlife in the area.
2. If the nest is in a remote location, bring someone along.
3. Have a cell phone with you.
4. Be aware of your surroundings at all times.
5. It is important to remember to look down while you are moving, not just up, to avoid tripping, falling into a hole or stepping on a snake.