

Holbrook hopeful more eagles will make their way here as winter weather changes

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
December 28 2015 5:30 AM



GRAFTON - From leaf-peeping to eagle watching, visitors flock down the Mississippi River and to its various state parks and nature preserves to view some of nature's finest marvels.

Unfortunately for those who had hopes to see eagles soaring above the Mississippi River to date, they may not have as much luck than in years passed.

It seems that the warmer temperatures that the area has been experiencing is deterring these majestic creatures from flying to our rivers and surrounding refuge areas.

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Randy Holbrook from the **Illinois Department of Natural Resources** out at **Pere Marquette State Park** says that the eagles that most audiences are used to seeing are few and far between this early in the season.

“In our first official outing of the season, we only saw about 14 or 15 eagles.” Holbrook said.

Although it is incredibly early in the season for regular migratory bird watching tours, Holbrook is hopeful that when colder weather arrives in the northern part of the U.S., we will be seeing more and more eagles with each outing.

“Regardless of weather conditions here, plenty of eagles will make their way down from Canada, Wisconsin and Minnesota to the waters of the Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri rivers,” he said. “Come to areas with constantly flowing waterways to feed on fish and small mammals near the water.”

Seeing a dozen or so eagles on a watch this early in the eagle viewing season is not uncommon, according to Holbrook.

In the height of the season, around January or February, it would not be uncommon to see near to 100 or more eagles in one venture.

“If we see 14 or 15 in January or February, then it does become a big deal,” Holbrook said.



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Although the number of eagles flying around our local waterways are low currently, eagle watchers can see five permanent eagle residents, along with other resident migratory birds and mammals at the **TreeHouse Wildlife Center in Dow, Ill. everyday between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.** On weekends, volunteers from the center will be guiding tours around the facility and could have a chance to meet an eagle up close.

Every Saturday in January, guests at the **Alton Regional Convention and Visitors Center** will have the chance to get up close and personal with a majestic eagle between **10 a.m. and 2 p.m.** at the facility located off Piasa Street downtown.

The center will also host the **Alton-Audubon Eagle Festival Saturday, Jan. 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** where family-friendly eagle-centric activities will take place, along with a live eagle meet-and-greet.