

TreeHouse Wildlife Center celebrates Eagle Days each weekend in January, February

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DOW, ILL. - Although the weather was quite snowy, there was plenty of coffee, treats and fascinating tales of migratory birds and mammals that have been rehabilitated, release or currently reside at the facilities of **TreeHouse Wildlife Center.**

Every weekend from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in January and February, guests are welcomed to come out to the large facility and its grounds to get up close and personal to some of the country's most majestic birds and mammals.



“We now have four mature bald eagles outside and our fifth and really exciting feature this year is **Emrys**,” **Andrea Schnelten, Director of Development** at the Treehouse Wildlife Center said. “He’s about a two-and-a-half-year-old bald eagle. What makes him special is that he has been in training to become an education and outreach bald eagle. He’s also quite a character.”

After being hit by a car and having his wrist amputated, the majestic creature came to the center to be rehabilitated. Unfortunately, his injuries were too severe and he will be unable to be released back into the environment.

Emrys lives in a gorgeous enclosure attached to the TreeHouse’s main building on a handmade life-size replica of a bald eagles’ nest created by one of the facility’s volunteers. With a quirky personality sure enough to make anyone smile, the bald eagle loves to greet guests as they come by his enclosure with chirps and his signature head moves.

“Emrys will go through several molts before he gets all of his white feathers on his head and tail, so I think it’s great that we can watch him grow into a mature bird. We really want people to come see us year after year so they can see him change. He really is the highlight for the center,” Schnelten said.

Emrys, along with four other bald eagles at the facility, travel to schools and businesses to teach them about the species and how to protect them.

For nearly 37 years, the TreeHouse Wildlife Center has worked off of donations from the public and sponsorships from area businesses and do not receive government funding. The refuge has also recently began their **Guardian** program where for a year, people can become a guardian for a resident bird and sponsor the treatment for new or current feathery and furry patients.



“We always are in need of volunteers to work both morning and evening shifts here. You don’t have to have a whole lot of experience working with animals, but if you love animals and want to help, we’d love to have you,” Schnelten said.

The Center also works with local and national colleges to provide internship and externship opportunities to those who are interested in working with animals at the unique facility.

Of course, Eagles aren’t the only creatures the TreeHouse caters to. Over 40 birds and mammals call the center their home or are receiving treatment for various injuries in the infirmary downstairs. Barn and barred owl, grey and red foxes, falcons, hawks and much more call the TreeHouse their home. The facility also houses a nursery where young squirrels can climb about in their cages before they are set to be released in the spring.

As a part of the **Alton Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau**, the Treehouse has become one of many locations around the River Bend where eagle watching has so fluently become a part of local culture. The practice brings people from around the country to this area to marvel at one of many of our nation’s symbols of freedom each year.