

# SOAR TO THE HEAVENS: Female bald eagle killed in accident on Berm Highway

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**ALTON** - The city of Alton's renowned bald eagle watching community is looking to the skies in remembrance of one female bald eagle that was accidentally struck and killed on **May 5**.

Affectionately named Olivia by **Marietta Massalone**, an area resident and avid eagle watcher, the protected species was hit off **Route 143**, otherwise known as the Berm Highway. A couple of weeks prior to the accident, the bird of prey had been spotted building her third nest in the area.

“It’s so sad,” Massalone said. “I was out there a few weeks ago taking photographs and watching her build a new nest by the highway.”

This accident was reported by two individuals driving on the busy highway. Since the person who struck the eagle has not been identified and the incident was certainly accidental, there will be no legal repercussions.

This particular bald eagle, known by several watchers, could have been known as one of the few mother eagles of this area. Although the eagle had hatched eggs in the past, **Pam Lippert**, Senior Wildlife Technician at the **Treehouse Wildlife Center**, had said that there have been no sightings of young eagles from her nests.

“We all feel so sorry for her mate,” Lippert said. “Typically, eagles mate for life, but if there is an instance like this, the male will find another mate when he is ready.”

Massalone captured photos of the bald eagle, unknowingly for the last time, a couple of weeks prior to the accident.

“Marietta and a couple of other watchers had seen that they were working really hard to build another nest,” Lippert said, mentioning that the eagle had been found with a patch in its feathers that is used to incubate eggs, indicating that she was a breeding female.

This type of accident, according to Lippert, has been occurring more often due to rising eagle populations. Their expanding territories also has contributed to more incidents being reported.

The technician also said that the eagle could have been hoping to feed upon some road kill off the highway when she was struck, assuming a large truck or semi would have hit her.

“It can happen,” Lippert said about this incident, “No one tries to do this kind of thing intentionally.”

The fallen eagle was transported by the **Alton Police Department** to the **Treehouse Wildlife Center** in Dow. From there, **Illinois Department of Natural Resources Conservation Police** take possession of the Eagle until it is sent to the **National Eagle Repository** in **Denver, Colo.**

In Native American cultures of around the country, certain parts of the eagle's body are considered sacred and used in ceremonial headdresses and other instruments. The National Eagle Repository will distribute parts of the fallen eagle to Native American groups across the country.