

Alton Eagle Ice Festival Kicks Off Winter Watching Season For Majestic Bird

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - The annual Alton Eagle Ice Festival on Saturday attracted a wide range of visitors to celebrate the return of the beautiful wintering American Bald Eagles to Southwest Illinois.



Flock Food Truck was one of the Alton hosts for the event, along with The National Great Rivers Center, the Hartford Confluence Tower, and the Audubon Center at Riverlands hosted four different events for the widely attended official kickoff to the eagle-watching season in the Alton area.

Cory Jobe, president/CEO of Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau, said: “Today we are here at Flock, one of the locations for the Alton Eagle Ice Festival. We have food trucks, adult drinks for kids, we have live ice carvers, we have an eagle meet and greet, music, and fire pits to stay warm. It is a beautiful day here.

“We also have three other locations this year - the National Great Rivers Museum with free lock and dam tours today to view eagles on the Mississippi. The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Hartford was open for eagle viewing along with a free program from 11-1 with the Treehouse Wildlife Center for winter birds of prey. The Audubon Center had tours throughout the day.”

Paige Laughunn, a park ranger/Natural Resources Specialist, at Natural Great Rivers Museum said people were able to go 80 feet above the river at their location and look for eagles that might be flying around this time of year.

"We also have an eagle nesting watching station with a bald eagle nest directly across from us. We have eagle crafts, we have a photo contest going on. It is really interesting for people to see eagles in the wild and the beauty of them and allows us to connect with them. I do enjoy the connection with the community themselves introduce their new facts and letting them know we care about them."

Jobe said the eagle-watching season takes place here from late December to early March around the region.

"It gets colder up north and the eagles fly here near the rivers confluence," he said. "Thousands of visitors come here. Many go to Pere Marquette State Park and go all the way from Alton to Grafton and across our area."

Debbie Gates was present at one of the events and said it was simply "a wonderful experience."

Jobe closed by saying: "Alton is a big tourism destination not only for domestic travels but international travel. We welcomed over 50 cruise ships with travelers from all over the world. People want to connect with nature-based tourism. We have something for everyone.

The eagle-watching drives visitors from all over the world."





[Bradley Piros also contributed to this story.](#)