

# **Bald Eagles Make Incredible Comeback In Illinois, More On Topic At Free Carlinville Library Event**

by Tom Emery

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CARLINVILLE – Bald eagles have made an incredible comeback in Illinois in recent decades. The state also has some of the best fishing in the Midwest.

Both topics are the focus of a free, one-hour program at the Carlinville Public Library on Thursday, Jan. 4 from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Scott Isringhausen, an Urban Fishing Coordinator in Regions 4 and 5 with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, will present the program, which includes a thorough look at the bald eagle in Illinois.

Isringhausen, who has been employed with the DNR since 1989, will discuss why bald eagles have made a comeback in Illinois, especially in winter.

Eating habits of eagles, physical characteristics such as eyesight, predators that threaten eagles, nest size, and egg-laying habits will also be discussed, as well as how to distinguish a mature bald eagle from an immature one.

Isringhausen will bring a stuffed bald eagle and other materials for an enhanced learning experience.

“We’ll also talk about how eagles have progressed from an endangered species to threatened, and now a protected one,” said Isringhausen, who is based at Pere Marquette State Park near Grafton. “The numbers have really increased in Illinois, and around the nation.”

When Isringhausen first began, there was only one bald eagle nest in the entire state. “Now there are hundreds of nests in Illinois,” he said. “Eagles are coming into places where you wouldn’t typically see them. They’re beginning to feed on things other than fish, and some are moving inland.”

Eagle sightings have become increasingly common around Macoupin County. In Carlinville this summer, numerous residents reported bald eagle sightings over the city.

That’s just one of many places in the county where eagles have been spotted, including areas near Medora, Chesterfield, Wilsonville, and Beaver Dam State Park.

Nearby, a bald eagle couple, nicknamed George and Martha in honor of the first President and his wife, has captivated visitors to Lake Lou Yaeger in Litchfield. To the north in Morgan County, a popular spot for eagles is along the Illinois River at Meredosia.

Bald eagles have been a major tourist attraction along the Great River Road near Alton and Grafton for the last twenty-five years.

Isringhausen’s program at Carlinville will also discuss fishing in the state, including different species and how to get youngsters involved in the activity.

“It’s so important to get kids outside and hooked on fishing rather than less desirable activities, which seem to be all around us,” said Isringhausen. “I want to get kids outdoors and off their cell phones. There’s so much that can be learned by fishing and spending time outside.”

After appearing in Carlinville, Isringhausen will appear at the Collinsville boat show from January 5-7. “There’s a portable pond at the show, where kids can come in and catch live fish,” he said. “It’s a great learning experience, and another way to introduce kids to fishing.”

Isringhausen, who has appeared across the region, is reaching out to teachers and youth groups that may be interested in hosting his free programs.

“I’m happy to come to schools or any place with kids, to discuss fishing and wildlife,” he said. “I’d bring fishing poles and talk about how to bait a hook, or anything else to help kids learn. If there are any schools or other places that may be interested, just give me a call.” Isringhausen may be reached at 618-786-3323, ext. 28.

For more information on Isringhausen’s program in Carlinville, contact the library at 217-854-3505 or [mail@carlinvillelibrary.org](mailto:mail@carlinvillelibrary.org).