

Eagle Ice Fest Brings Families and Eagle Watchers to Alton

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON/WEST ALTON - The annual Eagle Ice Fest brought nearly 1,000 attendees to FLOCK, the National Great Rivers Museum and the Audubon Center at Riverlands on Saturday, Jan. 6, 2024.

Attendees could enjoy live music, eagle ice carvings, raptor meet-and-greets and more at Saturday's festival. The event encouraged people to learn more about the wildlife in the area and engage with nature by utilizing local resources.

"It's a combination of a bunch of different organizations bringing free resources to people so that not only are they getting an education, especially about eagles, but they're learning about all these resources that they have in the area that they can go out and hike here or they can go learn about the dam," explained Ashley Lockwood, an educator with the Audubon Center.

There were two eagles spotted in the trees outside the Audubon Center, and Lockwood joked that the eagles greeted people as they entered the center. She said Eagle Ice Fest "went off without a hitch," with almost 800 people stopping by the Audubon Center throughout the day.

FLOCK hosted several activities and also housed a few ice sculptures, including an eagle, a steamboat and the Piasa Bird, by STL Ice Sculpture. A live eagle was present, and people could take photos with the bird and listen to a representative from World Bird Sanctuary talk about eagles.

At the National Great Rivers Museum, almost 700 attendees enjoyed an eagle craft, a film about eagles and other family-friendly activities. Travis Smith, a park ranger at the museum, noted that Eagle Ice Fest is unique because it is a "community-wide event" that facilitates collaboration between multiple agencies in the area.

"This event is kind of neat because it connects with local partners in the community and other locations, and it connects us all together on a common purpose," he said. "So it's really nice we at the National Great Rivers Museum get to be part of it."

Smith added that Eagle Ice Fest kicks off the eagle-watching season in the area, which brings more tourists to the Riverbend throughout the winter. For more information about Eagle Ice Fest or local eagle-watching, visit the [official Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau website at RiversAndRoutes.com](https://www.riversandroutes.com/official-great-rivers-and-routes-tourism-bureau-website-at-riversandroutes.com).