

 Audubon FLORIDA  
**EAGLE Watch**  
2016-2017



Photo: Kathy Abbott

### EagleWatch By The Numbers (2016-2017)

Audubon EagleWatch experienced significant growth in monitoring efforts for the 2016-2017 nesting season.



230+ volunteers & partners



7,200 reports of nest activity



5,000 volunteer hours



4,000 people reached through education



511 nest monitored statewide

## Behind the Binoculars

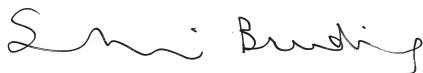
Just as nesting season began in Florida last year, I joined the Audubon Florida team to lead our Bald Eagle conservation efforts. I am proud to be part of EagleWatch, the premier citizen science initiative that works to protect eagles and their critical nesting habitat. Through EagleWatch, Audubon leverages the power and passion of volunteers to protect a species that was once on the brink of extinction. Last year, I shared in the experience of hundreds of volunteers who monitor eagle nests around the state as they reported their observations. The data we collect help track the health of Florida's eagle population and inform conservation decisions.

### **Even more exciting - last year was a good nesting season.**

But Bald Eagles in Florida continue to face pressures from loss of nesting and foraging habitat and human disturbance. I have learned that it is not enough to just protect eagles and their nests. We must also plan for long-term protection of the waterways where eagles fish and the old pine trees where future generations will nest and fledge their young.

I am proud to be part of Audubon's larger conservation efforts. Our work to create a healthy future for all birds helps ensure that species like the Bald Eagle never return to the endangered species list. Thank you to our EagleWatch volunteers, supporters, and partners for all you do to help protect eagles and educate others about these remarkable birds. It is truly my honor to work alongside you in this great conservation effort!

Sincerely,



Shawnlei Breeding  
EagleWatch Manager

P.S. - Florida's nesting eagles and eaglets need you. It takes time and resources to protect them. Can you help? Email [EagleWatch@audubon.org](mailto:EagleWatch@audubon.org) to join our team of volunteers or support our efforts by giving generously at [FL.Audubon.org/SupportEagleWatch](https://FL.Audubon.org/SupportEagleWatch).



## Audubon EagleWatchers Report Nesting Success



Juvenile Bald Eagles Photo: Helen Wagner

Despite the many pressures Bald Eagles face, Florida's population appears to be stable. For biologists monitoring nesting trends, the most important data point is how many young birds survive to fledge.

*Of the more than 500 nest territories monitored by Audubon this season, 420 were occupied and fledged 555 chicks.*

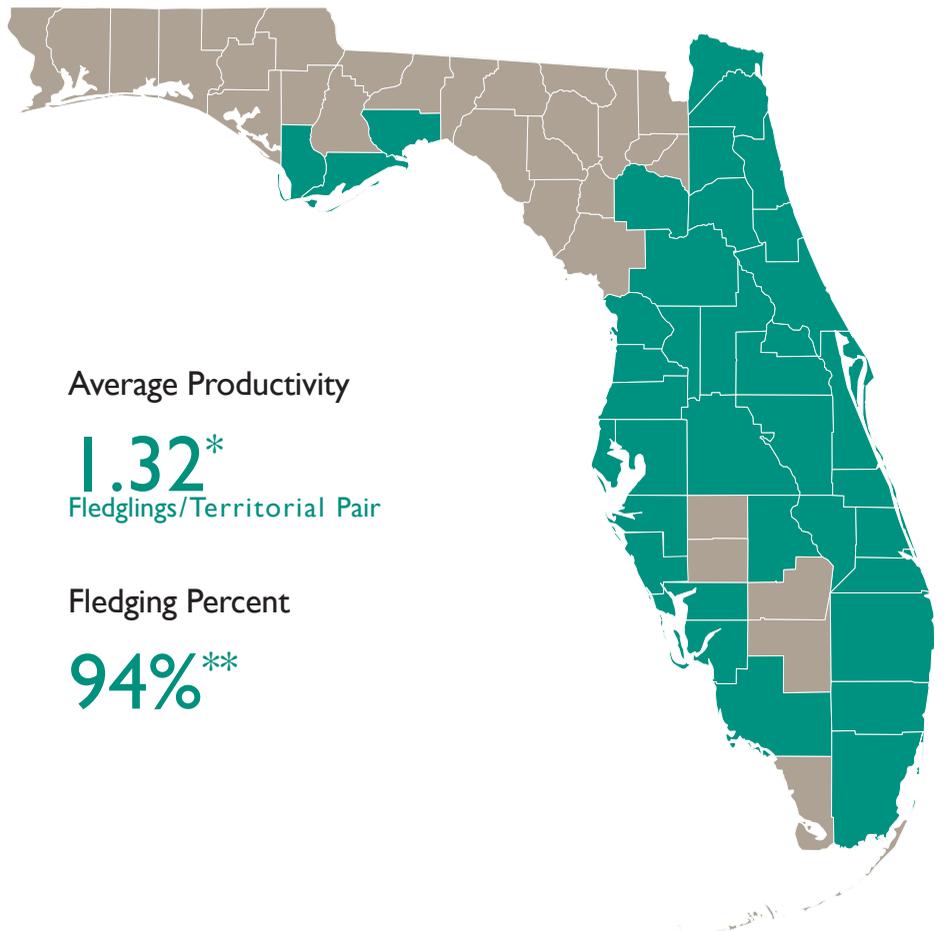
The average nest hatches 1-2 chicks, but nests with 3 chicks are occasionally recorded. This season, EagleWatch monitored a record-setting 12 nests that hatched and fledged 3 young each!



## Expanding Audubon's Reach: Record Number of Florida Counties Now Have EagleWatch Volunteers

The first step in protecting nesting Bald Eagles is identifying the places where they nest. Bald Eagles may build and use up to three alternate nests and may move nests due to habitat changes. With dozens of new volunteers, Audubon EagleWatch expanded to 10 new counties last nesting season and found 70 new or relocated nests! Roughly 50 percent of Florida counties now have active EagleWatch volunteers, meaning more Bald Eagles are being monitored and protected. Our EagleWatch team now tops just over 200 volunteers.

EagleWatch Nests by County		
County	Nestlings	Fledglings
Alachua	7	7
Brevard	9	9
Broward	5	5
Charlotte	1	1
Citrus	2	2
Clay	7	6
Collier	20	13
Dade	0	0
Duval	18	17
Flagler	4	4
Franklin	5	5
Gulf	5	5
Hernando	3	2
Highlands	4	4
Hillsborough	41	35
Indian River	14	13
Lake	22	21
Lee	26	26
Manatee	26	26
Marion	9	9
Martin	18	16
Nassau	3	3
Okeechobee	2	1
Orange	40	40
Osceola	22	21
Palm Beach	8	8
Pasco	22	21
Pinellas	49	49
Polk	78	72
Putnam	6	5
Sarasota	41	39
Seminole	24	23
St Johns	17	17
St Lucie	1	1
Sumter	2	1
Volusia	25	24
Wakulla	4	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>555</b>



### Average Productivity

**1.32\***  
Fledglings/Territorial Pair

### Fledging Percent

**94%\*\***

\*Average productivity is calculated as the number of fledglings per occupied nest territory for all Audubon-monitored Bald Eagle nests.

\*\*Fledging percent represents the number of nestlings confirmed as having fledged or reached an age for successful fledging.

## On the Horizon: Eagles Expected to Continue Nesting on Artificial Structures

Although the majority of Florida's Bald Eagles nest in live pines and other trees, nests on artificial structures have increased in recent years as natural habitat has disappeared. Roughly 20 percent of nests monitored by Audubon Florida are on cell towers and power transmission lines.

EagleWatch data from 2016-2017 indicate that, while unconventional, there was no significant difference in the number of eaglets produced between nests on artificial structures (1.33 fledglings per occupied nest) versus in trees (1.32). Unfortunately, artificial structures do not provide the same ecological benefits to ecosystems that live trees do. Audubon will continue to focus on protecting and expanding natural habitat so that Bald Eagles will always have the choice to nest in trees.



Photo: Reinier Munguia

## Wanted: Your Sightings of Banded Eagles

Last nesting season, 16 juvenile Bald Eagles were rehabilitated and released by the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey. Before their release back into the wild, Audubon fitted each eagle with their regular federal silver leg band as well as a large colored leg band.

These larger bands with alphanumeric codes can be read with binoculars or a spotting scope, without having to recapture the bird. This allows EagleWatchers and Floridians to report resightings to Audubon easily. Data from this effort will help Audubon biologists understand how nest site selection of parents affects the nest site selection of their offspring. For example, will eagles that hatch on cell towers choose to nest on cell towers themselves as adults?

So far, 13 female and three male juveniles have been banded. Four came from nests on artificial structures and were given black bands. Twelve came from nests in trees and were given green bands. It will take five years for these birds to reach reproductive age, but we can't wait to see what this effort teaches us! This on-going banding study continues in the upcoming nesting seasons. If you spot one of these banded Bald Eagles, you can help by emailing the date, location, and band color/code to [eaglewatch@audubon.org](mailto:eaglewatch@audubon.org).

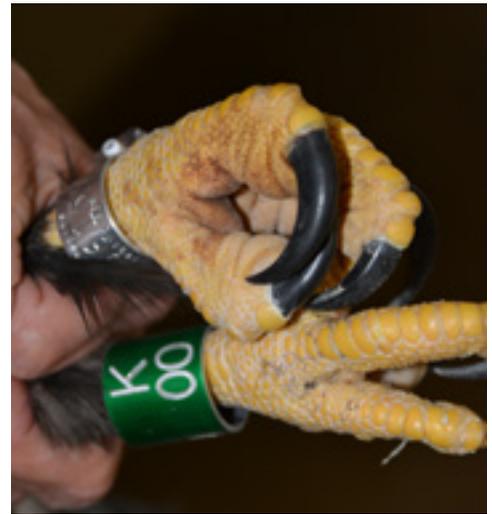


Photo: Lisa Sifonte

## EagleWatcher Named Volunteer of the Year by Audubon Florida

Ann Harwood-Nuss was awarded Audubon Florida's Volunteer of the Year Award at the annual Audubon Assembly last month. She inspires dozens of volunteers and has won battles to protect eagles as the EagleWatch Northeast Florida Coordinator. Ann pours herself tirelessly into so many of Audubon's EagleWatchers, and staff and volunteers alike report what a privilege it is to work with Ann. Congratulations Ann and thank you for your commitment to protecting natural Florida!



Photo: Reinier Munguia

# Social Media Tip Leads to the Protection of Bald Eagles

This spring, a Facebook tip led to protecting a nesting pair of Bald Eagles with young eaglets still in the nest. In Seminole County, developers were clear-cutting land when this photo was submitted to EagleWatch.

Within hours, EagleWatch volunteers were on site and discovered an active and previously undocumented Bald Eagle nest. Nest monitors contacted state officials, who quickly halted bulldozing activity, and the developer stopped further clearing until the young eagles had left the nest.

The places and habitats eagles need are disappearing. Audubon works to protect these special places through conservation of lands and protecting Florida's lakes and rivers. During the last nesting season, EagleWatch volunteers and community members frequently reported habitat disturbances and eagle interactions - often due to encroaching development and lack of available habitat that is suitable to raise eaglets. For eagles and all birds, Audubon will continue to stand up for their habitat and all the places that make Florida special.



## Audubon Secures Approval of Key Land Conservation Project

Last month, with Audubon's support, the Governor and Cabinet preserved Corona Ranch on the shores of the restored Kissimmee River—permanently protecting more than 2,000 acres. Eagles statewide should continue making a strong comeback as we work to protect areas that have two of the things eagles need: a lake full of fish and pines to nest.

Eagles are doing well around some lakes and rivers in parts of Central and South Florida. But in other areas, water quality is so poor that fish are not found. And in other places, development has cleared the big trees.

Eagles are great survivors, but more frequent and intense storms like Hurricane Irma are hitting Florida and blowing down nests and trees.

Bald Eagles are the measure and treasure of natural Florida. When Audubon counts them, we know that all is well. When they're missing, we know something is wrong.

For the sake of Bald Eagles and other wildlife, and people too, we must continue the effort to protect our lakes and estuaries so that they are abundant with the fish that feed so many species of birds. And we must protect natural areas that have the remaining old pines and cypress trees so that our favorite bird does not need to turn to power poles for a home.

### Lend Your Voice to Florida's Bald Eagles!

Sign up to join Audubon's action network at [FI.Audubon.org/SignUp](https://fi.audubon.org/signup) and help us protect the places Bald Eagles need. This year, we're advocating for \$150 million in funding for Florida Forever and Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, Florida's signature land conservation programs.



## Thank You, EagleWatchers!

The great work accomplished by Audubon EagleWatch would not be possible without the dedication and passion of more than 225 volunteers engaged in citizen science. More than 5,500 volunteer hours were donated to Florida's Bald Eagles during the 2016-2017 season.

Thank you to our volunteers for selflessly giving your time to help monitor and protect Bald Eagles in Florida! Together, we are making a difference for eagles and protecting this majestic species from the threats they face.

## Get Involved

### Become an EagleWatcher

EagleWatch nest monitoring runs from October through May. Check out [fl.audubon.org/EagleWatch](http://fl.audubon.org/EagleWatch) for more information or contact us at [eaglewatch@audubon.org](mailto:eaglewatch@audubon.org).

### Donate to Protect Bald Eagles

Give online at [fl.audubon.org/SupportEagleWatch](http://fl.audubon.org/SupportEagleWatch).

### Join the Audubon Network

Get involved with your local Audubon chapter and help save habitat in your area and keep Florida's water resources clean! Visit [fl.audubon.org/Chapters](http://fl.audubon.org/Chapters) to learn more.

### Visit Us at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey

Located just outside Orlando, the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey offers up-close encounters with Bald Eagles and other birds of prey. Visit [AudubonCenterForBirdsOfPrey.org](http://AudubonCenterForBirdsOfPrey.org) for directions and more information.

### Special Thanks to EagleWatch Donors

American Eagle Foundation

The Batchelor Foundation

Stanley and Mildred Zamo Charitable Trust

Thank you to all our donors, big and small! Your support protects eagles and their habitats today and for the future. As threats to both increase, your gifts are needed and appreciated now more than ever.

### Breaking News

## Irma Knocks Down a Quarter of Audubon-Monitored Nests

Hurricane Irma wreaked havoc across Florida at the same time Bald Eagle pairs were returning to their nests and preparing for the breeding season, which typically lasts from October to May. Initial reports from EagleWatch volunteers indicate:

- 65 percent of Audubon-monitored nests suffered little to no damage,
- 10 percent of Audubon-monitored nests suffered some damage, and
- 25 percent of Audubon-monitored nests were lost or completely destroyed.

Most eagle pairs that lost their nests are already starting to rebuild according to EagleWatch volunteers. The full impacts of Hurricane Irma remain to be seen during the 2017-2018 nesting season, but we are encouraged by the tenacity and resiliency of our national symbol of freedom.



Photo: Kathy Abbott

 AudubonCenterforBirdsofPrey

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 **Audubon** FLORIDA

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