

Bald Eagles In Union County

By: Leah Nicol

Bald eagles are a “huge success story” says Josh Shields, the Union County game warden. They have made a huge come back in the past few years and are expected to grow in population even more. “Lots of people are looking out for the eagles” said Josh Shields and that has certainly helped the population.

On Buck Run Farm in Union County, Ohio, a pair of bald eagles were spotted by John Nicol in early September. Eagles have since been looking for a nesting site. They have wanted to keep territory. Bald eagles are very territorial. They want to keep territory away from other eagles and even other birds. “I saw them chase off a blue heron one day” said John Nicol, who was one of the first people who saw the eagles.

Bald eagles can be found nowhere else in the world except in North America. They are known as the national bird of the United States of America. With their white heads they can be spotted in trees and woods by lakes or other bodies of water. They eat fish and other animals that they can catch. Sometimes they might even eat animals that another animal has killed. “They look for the biggest, strongest tree possible” says Josh Shields. Those trees are usually sycamores.

After the eagles find the perfect tree, they start building a nest. The nest could weigh as much as three tons, up to four feet deep, and five feet wide. The pair of eagles will come back to the same nest every year. After the eagles build a nest, the female eagle will usually lay three eggs every year. When the chicks hatch they do not look like bald eagles. They are all grey with some brown feathers. Once the chicks are ten to twelve weeks old they will leave the nest and one day start their own family.

The bald eagle population has been going up and down throughout Ohio. In the late 1970s the population was very low; there were only 4 nesting pairs in Ohio. This was because of DDTs, chemicals that can kill the animals, like eagles, at the head of the food chain. These chemicals were used for insect control. In 1972 DDTs were outlawed in the US. As of 2012, there were about 210 nesting pairs in Ohio, according to the ODNR (Ohio Department of Natural Resources) Division of Wildlife.

Along with the bald eagle population going up, golden eagle sightings have also been going up, according to Josh Shields. Golden eagles are rare in Ohio but in the past years the number of sightings have gone up. Both golden eagles and bald eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (1940), the Migratory Bird Act (1918), and the Lacey Act

(1900). All of these acts protect the eagles themselves, their nests, their eggs, and anything else that has to do with the eagles. The acts also say that you can not move any part of the eagle or anything else.

Bald eagles are an important bird and symbol to the US and its people. Even though the population is on the rise, we can all do our part to protect these birds so that they will be around for many years to come.