

Bald Eagles in Greene County

by Mel Grosvenor, Greene County Parks Naturalist



An enormous bird with white head and tail feathers can be nothing other than our nation's symbol, the majestic Bald Eagle. Many people are surprised to learn that they can be seen in Ohio at all, much less here in Greene County. Although your chances of seeing them increase as you head towards Lake Erie, Bald Eagles are sometimes seen in our area particularly this time of the year. In fact, the first time I ever saw a Bald Eagle in Ohio and I was not near Lake Erie was just off State Route 35 between Xenia and Beavercreek.

Although an adult Bald Eagle is unmistakable, they do not get the white head and tail feathers until they are up to 5 years old. They are all dark with some white mottled feathers. So you look up in the sky and see a large bird but it doesn't have a white head or white tail, is it an immature Bald Eagle? The more commonly seen large birds are hawks and vultures. Eagles are much larger than these birds. Most hawks have light bellies and wings when seen from below. Turkey Vultures lack the mottled appearance on their feathers. They also tend to soar with their wings forming a slight upward V shape, while Bald Eagles soar with flat wings.

The chances of you seeing a Bald Eagle in the area have a lot to do with being in the right place at the right time and keeping an eye to the skies. In the past they have been reported at Cemex Reserve in Fairborn, Creekside Reserve in Beavercreek and near Glenn Thompson Reserve in Beavercreek. Winter seems to be a more likely time of the year to see one in this area.

Bald Eagle populations are on the rise in Ohio. In 1979, there were only 4 nesting pairs living the state. As of 2008, the population has risen to more than 150 nesting pairs. These birds, which were nearly wiped out by the effects of the pesticide DDT, are no longer on the endangered species list. It's a great success story.



Seeing a Bald Eagle in flight is one of the most awe-inspiring sights in nature. With a little luck and an eye to the sky, I hope that you are able to start the New Year by seeing one in the area soon.