

US Forest Service

San Bernardino National Forest

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Volunteers Needed to count Bald Eagles

San Bernardino, Calif., December 3, 2008 Volunteers are needed to help the Forest Service count Bald Eagles this winter in the San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains. Volunteers are stationed at various vantage points around the mountain lakes where they map and note any eagle observations during a 1-hour period on a Saturday morning. This is the 30th year that the San Bernardino National Forest has organized monthly winter bald eagle counts.

Eagle Counts for this winter have been scheduled for the following Saturday mornings: December 20, January 10, February 14, and March 14. Mark your calendars now.

Volunteers will be needed for each census. Volunteers need not have experience--just bring binoculars, a watch and dress warmly. Concurrent Bald Eagle counts are held at Big Bear Lake, Baldwin Lake, Little Green Valley Lake, Lake Gregory, Lake Arrowhead, Lake Silverwood, and Lake Hemet.

Observers are stationed around the mountain lakes for a simultaneous 1-hour census/mapping effort once a month December through March. Through this method, the Forest Service has gained information about favorite use areas and fluctuations in numbers.

The San Bernardino mountains support the largest wintering bald eagle population in southern California. Eagles typically begin arriving in the area in late November and continue to stay in the area until early April. Numbers using the Big Bear Basin have fluctuated over the past 22 years, from lows of 6-7 to highs of 35-40.

In the early 1990s, Forest Service conducted a research project to learn more about what areas in the mountains are important for eagle foraging, perching, and night roosting. Fifteen eagles were caught and equipped with tiny radio-transmitters that allowed us to track their movements. Through radio-tracking, we learned that some of the same individual eagles return to the San Bernardino mountains year after year. We also determined that there is a lot of movement of eagles between the different mountain lakes and that the lakes do not have distinctive separate populations—the eagles regularly move between Silverwood, Big Bear, and Arrowhead lakes. We have also learned that some of the San Bernardino Mountains' eagles travel to Montana,

Wyoming, Idaho, Canada, and even the Northwest Territories (about 2000 miles one-way!) for nesting.

Scientists at Lake Silverwood also equipped some bald eagles with transmitters tracked by satellites. Some of those eagles were tracked all the way to Alberta, Canada and the Northwest Territories where they probably nested. Information regarding bald eagle migratory routes for these and other California eagles can be viewed from the University of Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group's web site at <http://www2.ucsc.edu/~scpbrg/migration.htm>.

Breeding populations of bald eagles in southern California were extirpated by the late 1950s. Until reintroduction efforts began in the 1980s on Catalina Island, the southern-most nest site known in California was in Lake County. Since 2003, a pair of bald eagles has successfully fledged babies several times at Lake Hemet! Potential nesting habitat exists on National Forest lands near all of the lakes in the San Bernardino Mountains. The Forest Service will continue to monitor these areas in the spring for future nesting attempts.

The bald eagle is a success story of the Endangered Species Act – through protection under that law, its populations recovered from the brink of extinction. Bald Eagles are no longer considered an Endangered or Threatened species. They still have full protection under the Bald Eagle Protection Act. Captive breeding programs, reintroduction efforts, the banning of DDT, and public education have all helped in the recovery of this species.

Catching a glimpse of our breath-taking national symbol is relatively easy during winter months in Big Bear. There are some fantastic opportunities for excellent close-up photographs too. Just look in the tallest trees around the lake near open water for perching eagles. Or, if the lake is partly frozen, look for eagles perched on the ice near small groups of ducks using the open water. Stop by the Forest Service's Big Bear Discovery Center (on North Shore Drive, 1-1/2 miles west of Stanfield Cutoff) and pick up a handout on eagles.

Remember that human presence may distract or disturb the eagles - so, try to limit your movements and don't make loud noises when they're nearby. If possible, remain in your car while looking at eagles - the car may act as a blind.

Bald Eagle count volunteers for the Big Bear Lake area should come to the Forest Service Big Bear Discovery Center on North Shore Drive at 8:00 a.m. for instructions. Volunteers for the Lake Arrowhead area should go to the Sky Forest Ranger Station at 8:00 a.m.. For more information, please call Robin Eliason, Wildlife Biologist at the Big Bear Ranger Station 909-382-2832. Volunteers for Silverwood Lake State Park should contact the park office for information during business hours of 8:00 am to 4:00 pm at 760-389-2281, and plan to meet at the Visitor Center at 8:00 a.m. Lake Silverwood State Park is also conducting Bald Eagle Barge Tours on weekends during the months of January and February, for reservations which need to be made in advance please contact the park office at 760-389-2281. Volunteers for Lake Hemet should contact Heidi Hoggan at 909-382-2945 and plan on meeting at the Lake Hemet Grocery Store at 8:30 a.m. for instructions.

To welcome and celebrate the eagles in Big Bear, the Forest Service and San Bernardino National Forest Association also invite you to participate in **Eagle Season**. Discovery Tours to view bald eagles will be held on December 27th and 28th. The tours consist of an introductory slide show and a tour bus ride around Big Bear Lake to look for eagles. Call ahead at 909-382-2790 for reservations and information. In addition, several presentations about bald eagles will be conducted at the Forest Service's Big Bear Discovery Center in December, January, and February – call for the dates and details.

For additional information about the San Bernardino National Forest, please visit:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/sanbernardino/>

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BIG BEAR LAKE EAGLE COUNT SUMMARY

(Includes Big Bear and Baldwin Lakes)

Month Year	December	January	February	March	April	Average	High Count
1978 - 79	7	27	27	18	9	18	27
1979 - 80	20	22	13	11	3	14	22
1980 - 81	11	19	25			18	25
1981 - 82	15	27	22	6	3	15	27
1982 - 83	7	27	18	11		16	27
1983 - 84	14	28	18	10		18	28
1984 - 85	27	8	3	3		10	27
1985 - 86	20	24		9		18	24
1986 - 87	20	24		9		18	24
1987 - 88	9	17	21	16		16	21
1988 - 89	12	6	4	12		9	12
1989 - 90	15	11	19	17		16	19
1990 - 91	6	16	22	17		15	22
1991 - 92	19	19	13	9		15	19
1992 - 93	6	15	3	3		7	15
1993 - 94	9	17	15	8		12	17
1994 - 95	10	10	20	No Count		13	20
1995 - 96	6	14	15	10		11	15
1996 - 97	10	15	5	9		10	15
1997 - 98	8	14 - 15	15	12		12	15
1998 - 99	8	17	15 - 17	9		11	17
1999 - 00	8	13	3	13		9	13
2000 - 01	13	13	14	12		13	14
2001 - 02	7	9	11	9		9	11
2002-03	6	13	15	9		11	15
2003-04	4	14	11	7		9	14
2004-05	6	1	4	5		4	6
2005-2006	7	4	6	No Count		6	7
2006-2007	4	8	5	5		6	8
2007-2008	4	3	6	3		4	6
Average	11	16	13	10	5	12.26	18.14
					Maximum	18	28
					Minimum	4	6
					Median	12	17