



News Release

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Forest Service

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Fishing Line – a Hazard to Bald Eagles

The Allegheny National Forest is home to the Bald Eagle, a Federally listed Threatened Species. At least three nests are known to occur along the side hills on the Pennsylvania side of the Allegheny Reservoir and three nests have been identified along the Allegheny River. The shorelines along these waterways are vital food foraging areas for the eagles.

Fishing line, discarded along the shoreline of Allegheny National Forest waterways, is a potential hazard to foraging bald eagles.

“Bald Eagles can be easily injured by getting their feet entangled in discarded fishing line along the Allegheny Reservoir or Allegheny River” stated forest wildlife biologist, Brad Nelson. “When their feet become entangled, they struggle to fly, become stressed and exhausted and eventually die” added Nelson.

Anglers can help ensure bald eagle safety by not discarding unwanted fishing line or lures on the shoreline. Anglers can take an additional step and pick up line and lures left behind by anglers using the area before them. Anglers are urged to dispose of unwanted line and lures in proper receptacles to not only keep the shores and waterways safe, but clean as well.

“Areas heavily fished by humans are also attractive to the eagles for foraging” said Nelson. “Frequently, eagles search for live fish in the same waters that anglers find productive” added Nelson. Eagles and a variety of other shore birds also scavenge for dead fish along the shoreline. Popular fishing areas are often heavily littered with discarded line which can jeopardize the safety of these birds.

The bald eagle is a large bird that can reach a height of approximately three feet with a wing span of up to eight feet. Eagles live almost exclusively around lakes, rivers, or seashores making their nests in large trees, cliffs or rock outcrops in remote areas along the shoreline. Eagle nests are expansive structures in the tops of large shoreline trees or rocks located within easy range of the shoreline for fishing. Eagles partner with their mate for life and often use the same nest structure year after year. The number of eagles nests in Northwestern PA has expanded in recent years.

Since the summer of 2000, Boy Scouts and other volunteers have been working with Scott Reitz, Bradford District Biologist, to clean up discarded fishing materials on the shoreline of heavily used fishing areas of the Allegheny Reservoir and Allegheny River. Individuals interested in volunteering for shoreline clean-up can contact Scott Reitz at the Bradford District office (814-362-4613) for further information.
