



Rock Creek Day Use Area Bald Eagles

This summer, a portion of the Rock Creek Day Use Area on the east side of the Mt. Hood National Forest will be closed to visitors from Memorial Day weekend until August 15, 2018. The closure is to protect a pair of bald eagles nesting in a large tree in the middle of the picnic area. These bald eagles have returned to the same nest for the last nine years.

During the breeding season, bald eagles are sensitive to human activities. If agitated by human activities, eagles may be unable to tend to their nest or young. Young nestlings are particularly vulnerable because they rely on their parents to provide warmth or shade and food.

In the 19th century, there were hundreds of thousands of eagles throughout the contiguous United States, Canada, and Alaska. By the early 20th century, populations had plummeted because of habitat loss, over-hunting, and pesticide use. In 1940, the United States Congress passed the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which prohibited anyone without a permit from disturbing or killing eagles, and taking any part of their nest or eggs. In 1967, the bald eagle was so scarce that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the bird as an endangered species.

Because of strict regulation and conservation efforts, the bald eagle population has soared during the last four decades. In 2007, the eagle was de-listed, and the bald eagle's recovery became one of America's biggest conservation success stories. The eagle is still protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Hundreds of animals have been listed as endangered or threatened, but very few have recovered to the point where they can be taken off the list. This recovery, in part, is due to the conservation actions taken by the American public.

Bald eagles have been on the Mt. Hood National Forest for decades (and possibly centuries), but were first observed in the Rock Creek Day Use area in 2009. The first nest that the eagles built blew out of the tree during a winter storm. But the eagles spent all spring painstakingly rebuilding their home, and finished the nest just in time to lay eggs. That year the chicks did not survive but in 2010, the eagles returned, and successfully raised two eaglets. This year's chicks hatched during the third week of April which is later than their average hatching date of March 30.

The Rock Creek Reservoir restrooms and boat ramp will remain open. However, vehicles will not be allowed to park adjacent to the boat ramp, and will need to park in an open area located in the campground overflow parking area.