

News

Audubon Center for Birds of Prey Celebrates 700 Eagle Release Milestone

A rehabilitated Bald Eagle is returned back to the wild.



By Karina Jiménez
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Birds in This Story



A clinic staff member carefully holds a Bald Eagle in her arms as the team prepares to care for the injured raptor.

The Audubon Center for Birds of Prey released Patient #2023-0024, a Bald Eagle, on Friday in a special ceremony celebrating the release of more than 700 eagles since the Center’s Raptor Trauma Clinic opened in 1979. Maitland Mayor John Lowndes assisted with the release as a guest of honor.

Patient #2023-0024 came to the Raptor Trauma Clinic on January 13 with lacerations and punctures after a territory fight with another eagle. The Clinic team also treated the eagle for lead poisoning and parasites. In 2022, the Center released 23 Bald Eagles back to the wild, and already in 2023, two eagles have returned to their natural habitat.

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“To be able to release the 700th rehabilitated Bald Eagle into the wild is a great conservation achievement, says Katie Warner, Director for Audubon Center for Birds of Prey. “Like people, these birds depend on a healthy environment to call home. Audubon—through conservation actions, advocacy, rehabilitation, and education— protects the places these birds need, now and into the future,” she added.

Bald Eagles were removed from the federal list of Threatened and Endangered Species in 2007. Though they remain protected by both state and federal laws, they still face threats to their survival. Common threats include habitat and nest destruction, collision with vehicles, poisoning, and territorial fights. With loss of habitat due to continued land development, many eagles are choosing to nest on man-made structures such as power lines and communication towers. These non-natural nest sites can present many hazards to the young eaglets when they fledge.

Many of the injured eagles that arrive at the Raptor Trauma Clinic are found by Audubon EagleWatch volunteers, a community science program based at the Center. More than 600 EagleWatch volunteers monitor 1,100+ Bald Eagle nests in 53 counties so are able to contact Audubon if an eagle falls from a nest or they see an injured adult. In its 30-year history, EagleWatch data and observations prompted additional nest protections from both federal and state wildlife agencies, and today Florida’s eagle population has made an amazing recovery and is now considered stable, with approximately 2,500 nesting pairs.

The Center treats more than 700 raptors each year, including eagles, hawks, and owls. Those that survive are either released where they were found or placed at zoos and other properly licensed facilities nationwide.

Visitors can see Florida’s native raptors up close at the Center for Birds of Prey! Visit us from Tuesday – Sunday between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Learn more at: <https://cbop.audubon.org/visit-us/plan-your-visit>

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