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# Avian flu killed both eaglets at North Fort Myers nest

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Published January 30, 2025 at 10:28 AM EST



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Southwest Florida Eagle Cam / WGCU

Efforts by [CROW - Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, Inc.](#) and [Joshua Tree, Inc.](#) helped to retrieve the remains of E24 for evaluation and testing. The eagle's sibling, E25, has also died.

The deaths of both eaglets at the North Fort Myers nest along Bayshore Drive are being linked to avian flu, an investigation by the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife has found.

The eaglets, designated E24 and E25, started having seizures over the past few days. E24 died in the nest and E25 fell from the nest and was found dead. Both remains were recovered by CROW.

The avian flu diagnosis was announced at a press conference called by CROW officials Thursday morning to discuss the deaths. It was surmised the birds may have contracted the disease via an infected bird they consumed.

The eagle's parents, identified as M15 and F23, have been seen around the nest site but little is known about their health status.

During the media briefing at the nest site Thursday, Dr. Allison Charney Hussey, the Executive Director at CROW, clarified what she said was misinformation that was spread on social media about the eaglets.

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"Just to make sure that everyone knows where we have been and what we've been doing regarding this nest over the past week so on, when we learned that E 24 had passed on Monday, January 27, we confirmed with authorities that removal of the dead eaglet was going to be necessary for the health and safety of the remaining eagles in the nest," she said.

"CROW was granted permission, state and federal authorization, actually, to retrieve E24's body. And I want to point out to you that we did not have authorization to pull E25 from the nest at the time of that retrieval, but our veterinarian on scene completed a visual exam and found E25 bright and alert and with no signs of stress."

Hussey said that to minimize potential effects of human contact with the surviving eaglet at that time, which was actively avoiding the CROW veterinarian and moving closer to the edge of the nest, the vet quickly returned to the ground to avoid any further issues.

She added: "I want to again, point out to you that at that time, E25 was not showing any signs of stress, was being actively cared for by the parents and being fed so there were, there are inherent risks when interfering with wild nests, and that those must be considered very carefully any time intervention is performed at a nest."

Hussey also said the deaths had been difficult to take. "It's deeply sad and emotional, and we do recognize that we share in that. Our CROW team was deeply affected by the loss of these eaglets."

Dr. Jessica Comolli, CROW's research and medical director, said the hospital received notification that the two eaglets tested positive for HPA I or highly pathogenic avian influenza, a virus that causes high mortality in the species of susceptible birds, which usually includes poultry, but also many wild birds.

Comolli said the current strain of avian influenza being transmitted has caused devastating losses in the birds it infects.

"While some birds, like waterfowl, can shed the virus while remaining asymptomatic, other species, such as birds of prey, are highly susceptible and can succumb to the disease rapidly," she said. "It can also be carried by contaminated objects. The eaglets in this nest likely contracted the disease by eating an infected bird. We know that these results are especially worrisome for all of you, and are you know, understandably concerned for the parents."

Comolli said signs to watch for in the eagles would include weakness, lack of appetite, difficulty breathing, inability to stand, inability to fly, and any neurological signs such as tremoring and seizures. If those signs were seen in either of the parent eagles, she urged a call to CROW at 239-322-5068 or the Florida Wildlife Commission at 888-404-3922.

About M15 and F23, Comolli said: "At this time, CROW does not have authorization to attempt to capture the parent eagles M15 and F23. This task would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, and unsafe for the animals, because they're both flighted."

She added that yesterday, the two adult eagles were seen flying overhead. "And CROW continues to work in partnership with the Pritchett family, dedicated volunteers, USFWS and FWC to monitor the wellbeing of the adult eagles, and we will respond if necessary, while also being mindful of the safety of the animals and the people that are involved," she said.

Virginia Pritchett McSpadden, co-founder of the [Southwest Florida Eagle Cam web site](#), [said she was shocked by the deaths](#).

"Unfortunately, I hate to be here today talking to you guys about this, this topic, after 12, 13, years of having the eagles being streamed live, this is definitely one of the worst case scenarios we've ever seen to have both eaglets being taken down so suddenly and unpredictably," she said. "It's just been heartbreaking for all, for all our viewers, for us as a family that have run the cams, and we're just so appreciative of CROW and FWC to help us to get these quick answers today on what actually happened."

A posting on the Southwest Florida Eagle Cam Facebook page said: "We are completely shattered to report, this morning around 3am; E25 started to have seizures similar to those of E24 and fell out the nest. [CROW - Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, Inc.](#) was able to get to the nest before sunrise to retrieve E25's remains for a full necropsy."

The eagle cam site, sponsored by Dick Pritchett Real Estate, has been training cameras on the nest for more than a decade.

"This is uncharted territory for our cameras and viewers," the web site posted. "We will keep the cameras streaming to continue to observe the health of M15 & F23. When we have more information we will post it here."

This isn't the first tragedy at the North Fort Myers nest.

In 2019 Harriet and M15 produced two eggs with one of the eggs being unviable.

The one eaglet that did hatch, named E14, died suddenly in mid-January 2020 from what the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife determined to be "markedly increased levels of brodifacoum, a type of anticoagulant rodenticide or rat poison," according to a news release.

And in 2023 eagle matriarch Harriett inexplicably vanished from the nest. She was never found.

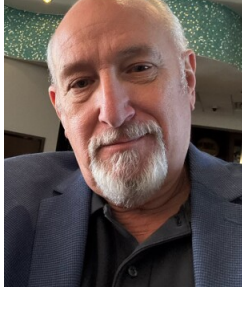
Later that year male partner M15 mated with another eagle, who was designated F23.

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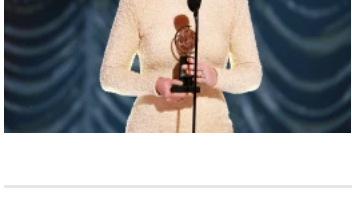
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