

Ohio Department of Natural Resources DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

BALD EAGLE NEST CENSUS RESULTS 2020

April 2020

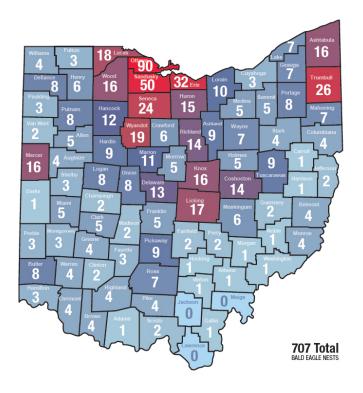
In the spring of 2020, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife completed its first statewide bald eagle nest census since the bald eagles were removed from the state threatened species list (2012). The census relied on reports from the public and staff, primarily through the time period of February 1 and March 31. More than 2500 reports of eagle nests were received by the public. Nests were confirmed through the middle of April by Division biologists, primarily through aerial surveys, but with some ground truthing. The total count includes both currently active, failed, and inactive bald eagle nests, although the majority of nests were active with eagles present, incubating, or with young. The bald eagle nesting period occurs over several months and the ability to precisely confirm activity given the length of the survey period and the high nest count was a challenge. In addition, inactive bald eagle nests are protected by law.

Biologists confirmed 707 bald eagle nests in 85 counties throughout Ohio (Table 1). This was a 150% increase over the 2012 census, during which 281 nests were documented in 59 counties. All regions of Ohio saw an increase in the numbers of bald eagle nests, but southwestern Ohio (Division of Wildlife District 5) had the greatest increase, jumping 722% from 9 to 74 nests.

In 2020, the county with the highest total was Ottawa County in northwestern Ohio along Lake Erie with 90 nests. This county has been the epicenter of bald eagle activity in Ohio since the 1970s. Its proximity to Lake Erie and high concentration of coastal wetland marshes make it ideal bald eagle habitat. Characteristics of other counties with high numbers of bald eagle nests include proximity to Lake Erie, and/or the presence of large lakes, reservoirs, substantial wetlands, or large river corridors with mature trees that provide nesting habitat. The only counties not documented with eagle nests were Jackson, Lawrence, and Meigs county, all in southern Ohio. It is likely that the dense forest cover and low numbers of

wetlands or lakes in this area make these counties less suitable for bald eagles. However, two of these counties are bordered by the Ohio River, a suitable area for bald eagles. It is possible that any eagles in the area may have chosen to nest across the river in Kentucky and West Virginia.

Clearly, the bald eagle population is thriving in Ohio. A cleaner environment, as a result of the banning of DDT and the regulation of other environmental pollutants, the adaptability of the bald eagle to a landscape modified by human activities, and other human intervention efforts such as wildlife rehabilitation, have all helped to contribute to the bald eagles' recovery from a low of 4 nests in the late 1970s. Bald eagles remain protected under state and federal laws, including the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.



District/County	2012	2020	Percent Increase
Central Ohio (DOW-D1)			
Allen	0	5	500
Champaign	0	2	200
Delaware	7	13	86
Fairfield	0	2	200
Fayette	0	3	300
Franklin	3	5	67
Henry	0	6	600
Knox	7	16	129
Licking	3	17	467
Logan	1	8	700
Madison	0	2	200
Marion	6	11	83
Morrow	2	5	150
Pickaway	3	9	200
Union	4	8	100
Central Ohio Total	36	112	211
Northwest Ohio (DOW-D2)			
Crawford	3	6	100
Defiance	2	8	300
Erie	17	32	88
Fulton	0	3	300
Hancock	4	12	200
Hardin	1	9	800
Huron	5	15	200
Lucas	8	18	125
Ottawa	46	90	96
Paulding	0	3	300
Putnam	2	8	300
Richland	5	14	180
Sandusky	33	50	52
Seneca	7	24	243
Van Wert	0	2	200
Williams	0	4	400
Wood	7	16	129
Wyandot	12	19	58
Northwest Ohio Total	152	333	119

District/County	2012	2020	Percent Increase
Northeast Ohio (DOW-D3)	2012	2020	1 crociii ilicroasc
Ashland	2	9	350
Ashtabula	9	16	78
Carroll	0	1	100
Columbiana	1	4	300
Cuyahoga	2	3	50
Geauga	6	7	17
Harrison	1	1	0
Holmes	1	5	400
Jefferson	1	2	100
Lake	4	7	75
Lorain	3	10	233
Mahoning	5	7	40
Medina	1	5	400
Portage	5	8	60
Stark	1	4	300
Summit	2	5	150
Trumbull	9	26	189
Tuscarawas	6	9	50
Wayne	2	7	250
Northeast Ohio Total	61	136	123
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Southeast Ohio (DOW-D4)			
Athens	0	1	100
Belmont	1	4	300
Coshocton	6	14	133
Gallia	0	1	100
Guernsey	1	2	100
Hocking	1	1	0
Jackson	0	0	0
Lawrence	0	0	0
Meigs	0	0	0
Monroe	1	4	300
Morgan	1	1	0
Muskingum	2	6	200
Noble	1	1	0
Perry	0	2	200
Pike	2	4	100
Ross	4	7	75
Scioto	2	2	0
Vinton	0	1	100
Washington	1	1	0
Southeast Ohio Total	23	52	126

District/County	2012	2020	Percent Increase
Southwest Ohio (DOW-D5)			
Adams	0	1	100
Auglaize	0	4	400
Brown	1	4	300
Butler	0	8	800
Clark	0	5	500
Clermont	0	4	400
Clinton	0	2	200
Darke	0	1	100
Greene	0	4	400
Hamilton	1	3	200
Highland	1	4	300
Mercer	3	16	433
Miami	0	5	500
Montgomery	1	3	200
Preble	0	3	300
Shelby	0	3	300
Warren	2	4	100
Southwest Ohio Total	9	74	722
Ohio Total	281	707	152

Table 1. 2020 State of Ohio Bald Eagle Nest Count by District/County. Count includes active, failed, and inactive nests.