

PALMER RANCH EAGLE NESTS

There are three bald eagle nests in the Sarasota County Parks on Palmer Ranch, one in Culverhouse Nature Park and two in Scherer-Thaxton Preserve.

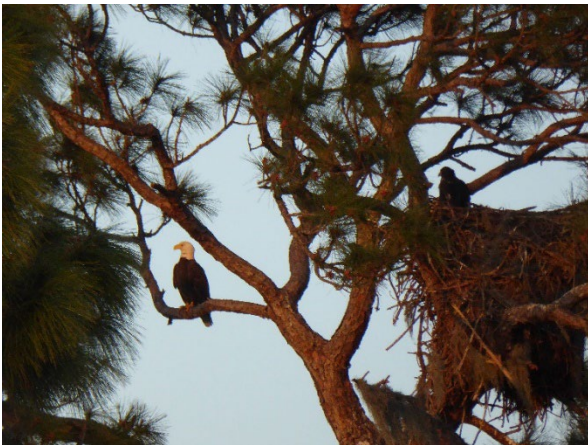
Nestoration in Culverhouse Nature Park began in mid-November. An eaglet appeared in late January and was hopping from branch to branch in early April. The eaglet fledged in mid-April. The eaglet was reluctant to fly from the nest, so an adult brought food to a tree about a hundred feet from the nest until the eaglet flew over to snatch the food and return to the nest for the meal.

In Scherer-Thaxton Preserve one nest was blown down by Hurricane Ian. The adult eagles rebuilt the nest but for some reason did not produce any eaglets. In the other nest, which is on state parkland, nestoration was underway in early January. An eaglet appeared in late February and was hopping from branch to branch in late March. The eaglet fledged in early April. By the third week of April, the eaglet was able to fly south to a distant tree at the southern edge of the wetland.

In Oscar Scherer Park, just south of Palmer Ranch, two bald eagle nests each housed two eaglets, which fledged in late April and late May. May fledging was so late, because the nest of previous years had been blown down by Hurricane Ian and had to be rebuilt. The new nest was constructed in a live tree that was more secluded than the dead tree in the open field that had held the earlier nest.

Here are some facts about bald eagles that you might find of interest:

- Bald eagles are found only in North America.
- Florida has the largest breeding population of bald eagles in the lower 48 states.
- Bald eagles in Florida breed from October to May, while those in the north breed from March to July.
- Male and female bald eagles can be told apart by size. Females are generally larger than males, as is the case with all raptors.
- Bald eagles usually keep the same mate for life.
- Bald eagles return to the same territory every year and often keep the same nest for several years. The largest bald eagle nest in Florida measured two tons; it was in St. Petersburg. (Courtesy Audubon Society EagleWatch)



Written by the Oliver Janney from the Palmer Ranch Watershed / Natural Assets Committee, a group dedicated to maintaining and improving our water, preserves, and common areas.