



News Release

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

Wendy Zirngibl Public Affairs Specialist 907.789.6272 wmzirngibl@fs.fed.us [Twitter@TongassNF](https://twitter.com/TongassNF)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

9 March 2012

Contact: Brian Logan, Forest Wildlife Biologist
907.789.6298
blogan@fs.fed.us

Tongass advises keeping distance from eagles and other birds during nesting

JUNEAU, Alaska—The eagles are nesting! The Forest Service reminds Southeast Alaskans to be mindful of disturbing early-nesting birds, particularly eagles, ravens, crows, and owls.

Eagles and other birds are now being seen carrying branches and other materials and behaving defensively against other birds—obvious signs that they have begun nesting for the season. At this early stage, these birds are particularly vulnerable to disturbance around their nests.

A common assumption is that nest disturbance has the greatest impact when young are present, but Brian Logan, wildlife program leader for the Tongass, points out that the risk of nest abandonment is far greater during the early stages of nesting, because the birds have less invested in their young.

According to Logan, bald eagles in the wild typically live 15 to 25 years, and often return to the same nest—with the same mate—for years or even decades. But despite their loyalty to a particular nest site, a disturbance can cause the raptors to abandon nesting attempts for that year.

In terms of reproduction, Logan says, “this can be a significant impact because eagles and other raptors almost never re-nest within that season after abandonment.” That means there will be no young for the mating pair that year.

To avoid disturbing nesting eagles, people should remain 330 feet—about the length of a football field—from the nest, if they are not visible from the nest or if the eagles are accustomed to human presence in the immediate vicinity. If human activities are visible or if the eagles are unaccustomed to human activities near the nest, then 660 feet is the recommended distance.

With a population of 13,000 to 26,000, Southeast Alaska hosts the highest density of bald eagles anywhere. The region also has more eagle nests per mile of shoreline, by far, than any other locale. Logan stresses that the remarkable health of the bald eagle locally is due to “the strong ethic of natural resource stewardship that exists in the collective community of Southeast Alaska.”

-30-

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.