



NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service

Daniel Boone National Forest

Morehead Ranger District

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For Immediate Release

FOREST SERVICE OFFICIALS CLOSE PART OF NATIONAL FOREST TO PROTECT BALD EAGLES

Ben Worthington, Forest Supervisor for the Daniel Boone National Forest signed an order on April 2, 2004, to officially close approximately 150 acres on the Morehead Ranger District adjacent to Cave Run Lake to protect a newly discovered bald eagle nesting territory. This is the first known bald eagle nest on Cave Run Lake.

"Based upon determinations by our biologists and using guidelines from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in Frankfort, I have established a protection zone to help ensure the breeding success of a pair of bald eagles on the shore of Cave Run Lake," Worthington said.

As soon as the nest was reported to the Forest Service, Morehead District personnel initiated efforts to verify its existence and to delineate a protection zone before the busy recreation season begins in May. Visitors to Cave Run Lake will notice a new buoy line along the shoreline directly across from the Twin Knobs beach area with signs notifying the public that the water area behind the buoys, along with the land adjacent to it, are off limits to any kind of human activity.

"We have tried to establish an adequate protection zone on both the water and land area to protect the eagles while minimizing recreational impacts to visitors," stated Morehead District Ranger Dave Manner. "We are asking the public to please observe this restriction so that these magnificent birds can be successful in hatching and raising young." Forest personnel are also respecting the protection zone; therefore, they have been unable to determine how many eggs are in the nest.

"Studies have shown that human presence near a nest is the most severe impact that can occur during nesting," said Morehead District Biologist Tom Biebighauser. "If a nesting eagle is disturbed, the nesting pair will instinctively fly off the eggs to ward off the intruder, potentially causing the eggs to chill which in turn may destroy hatching opportunities."

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Prior to the closure order, there were reports that individuals had been in the area, trying to get a close-up view of the eagles. This order will enable Forest Service personnel to enforce the closure and provide protection for the eagles. If these birds breed successfully, the young should fledge by the end of June.

"This nesting activity is one of the most significant events to occur in the wildlife arena near Cave Run Lake since the Lake was impounded in the early 70's," said Steve Bonney, Regional Biologist with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. While bald eagles are commonly seen during the winter months around the Cave Run Lake and Minor Clark Fish Hatchery, they usually return to their northern breeding grounds by early spring. "The Forest Service has taken all the appropriate steps to protect these birds and our Agency personnel stand ready to support their efforts in any way we can," Bonney added. Department personnel have been instrumental in helping to monitor and protect the nest since it was reported in January.

The bald eagle is currently listed as a federally threatened species, "down listed" from the endangered species list nearly three years ago by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The down-listing occurred as a result of increasing bald eagle populations throughout North America. Despite their changed status, from endangered to threatened, bald eagles remain protected under the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald Eagle Protection Act.

Only two other lakes in eastern Kentucky have reproducing bald eagles, Laurel River Lake in Laurel and Whitley County and Yatesville Lake in Lawrence County. The majority of bald eagle nests are found in western Kentucky at the Land Between the Lakes. Now visitors to Cave Run Lake may soon see homegrown bald eagles while they are fishing, skiing or boating on the lake during the hot summer months to come. For more information contact the Morehead Ranger District Office at 606-784-6428.

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