

March 4, 2021

Hello all you fine roost counters:

On February 28 all of you braved a balmy count and tallied 46 eagles through 30 hours of volunteer effort (Table 1). Thank you so very much for completing yet another winter of successful, interesting, useful and informative roost counts.

The warmer weather in the week preceding the count re-opened the river and got eagles 'in the mood' so to speak. Eagles were evenly distributed along the whole river stretch that we monitor and in off-river roosts as well. Extensive courtship flying was reported from Lone Rock Roost while adult pairs were at or near their nests in Ferry Bluff and Leland Roosts. Unlike last year, we saw very little conflict at any roost between presumed nesting pairs and other eagles attempting to roost in the same bowls containing the nests. Why there was so much conflict observed last year while so little conflict was seen this year is unknown. Perhaps it is even a sampling error since two of the last 3 counts were so cold. It is a complicated eagle world out there and we are just getting glimpses of that world once every two weeks.

Another encouraging aspect of the counts this winter is that more of you are getting out to marvel at our winter wonderland and to count eagles in the process. Thank you for recruiting others. Let's continue that effort! Pete Schlicht counted with three seniors from Sauk Prairie High School: Ruby Sandeman (who participated in several counts), Leah Froelich and Bailey Magnuson. Pete said that his three colleagues had far better eyesight than him. We appreciate your involvement and assistance.

To follow up on yet another low year of eagles wintering in the Lower Wisconsin River, we are reaching out to groups who conduct roost counts from the other two eagle winter areas in Wisconsin – Eagle Valley near the junction of the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers, as well as the Fox River Valley near Oshkosh – to see if they are experiencing lower winter eagle numbers over the past few years as we are. The comparison should be interesting. I will let you know what we find out. There has been no word as yet.

I hope we will have a good counting season next year and I look forward to communicating, and where possible, counting with you again. Thank you always for your contributions. They have been most meaningful.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeb Barzen". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jeb Barzen
President, Ferry Bluff Eagle Council

