

March 2, 2022

Hello all you fine roost counters:

On February 27, you collectively counted 32 eagles through 24 hours of volunteer effort. Another valiant effort on a balmy afternoon! Thank you. In my opinion, our count results last Sunday were pretty similar to the previous 3 counts collected in January and February, except that the warm evening allowed eagles to roost in non-traditional spots where we were not observing. Thus, instead of counting 60-65 eagles as in previous counts, we tallied 32 (Table 1).

Evidence of missing eagles flying into their night roost arise from several observations. Over a 20-minute period Joe Howard watched 6 eagles fly past his observation post at Ferry Bluff. The eagles were coming from the Sauk Prairie area located up river, and these birds flew past Ferry Bluff before continuing their movement downstream. These birds, however, were not seen flying into Fox Roost. They could have been missed at Fox because this roost is hard to observe completely with one counter. Alternatively, the eagles that flew past Ferry Bluff could have continued downstream to Lone Rock Roost, a distance of 20-25 miles. From our telemetry project, however, we never measured such a long roost flight though long roost flights would be possible. The eagle numbers at Lone Rock, however, have been remarkably consistent since the January 2 count whereas the eagles flying by Ferry Bluff, without roosting there, are unusual.

Instead, under the very warm conditions we had during the count I think the eagles were engaged in courtship flying up until dark and then settled wherever they felt like roosting, regardless if the roost was a traditional area or not. Supporting this contention are my observations from the Prairie du Sac overlook on Saturday where at least 10 individual eagles were engaged in various types of courtship flying for two hours. I have never seen such extensive courtship activity.

So, my best guess is that we have had no change in eagle numbers wintering within the Lower Wisconsin Riverway since mid-January. Our winter weather has been consistent throughout this period as well so few factors might have forced any change in eagle numbers.

Some other interesting events were observed during our last count of the year. Observers at Sugar Loaf Roost observed unusual roost flight behaviors that suggested eagles might be roosting in the bluff/bowl immediately east of Sugar Loaf. Next year we will have to continue our observation of that area to see if this new roosting area is used. Though more eagles roosted at Sugar loaf this winter than in the previous several winters, continued sporadic use of Sugar Loaf continues to be of concern.

From Ferry Bluff Roost, two groups of people were observed at the top of Cactus Bluff during the count, an area that is currently closed to winter entry (December 1 – March 31). This closure is to prevent disturbance of eagles in their traditional night roost near Cactus Bluff (part of the north unit for Ferry Bluff SNA). The good news is that FBEC collaboration with law

enforcement led to an encounter with both groups. We appreciate the rapid and effective response by DNR wardens to our TIP (Turn In Poachers) call and hope that these encounters will decrease the trespass issue at Ferry Bluff that is disturbing eagles.

As hard as it is to believe, we have completed yet another winter eagle season. Thank you very much for your many efforts on behalf of eagles and the Lower Wisconsin Riverway community (both human and other denizens). Be well.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeb Barzen". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letters being larger and more prominent.

Jeb Barzen
President, Ferry Bluff Eagle Council

Table 1. Coordinated roost count results for the winter of 2021/2022 by roost. Column headings are: A=Adult, I=Immature, U=Unknown age and T=Total.

FBEC Roost Count Summary																												
	Dec. 5, 2021				Dec. 19, 2021				Jan. 2, 2022				Jan. 16, 2022				Jan. 30, 2022				Feb. 13, 2022				Feb. 27, 2022			
ROOST	Ad	Im	Unk	Tot	Ad	Im	Unk	Tot	Ad	Im	Unk	Tot	Ad	Im	Unk	Tot	Ad	Im	Unk	Tot	Ad	Im	Unk	Tot	Ad	Im	Unk	Tot
Blackhawk	1	1		2	9	2		11	23	16	2	41	3	7	1	11	1	7		8	12	6		18	2	5		7
Sugarloaf				0	9	15	5	29	3	7	1	11	4	10	2	16				0				0	2	1		3
Isenring																												
Ferry Bluff				0	28	22	4	54	20	24	13	57	4	14	6	24	10	16	2	28	8	14	1	23	3	3		6
Thunderbird																												
Schroeder																												
Cassell																												
Fox	1			1	3	1	5	9	1			1			1	1				0				0				0
McDonald				NC				0				0				NC				0				NC				NC
Jones Slough																												
Lone Rock	36	8	1	45	64	20	2	86	8	7	6	21	5	5		10	4	1		5	4	10		14	4	10		14
Leland																												
Ederer/Been				0	2	2	1	5				NC	2	1		3	6	5	1	12		1		1	2			2
Big Hollow																												
Devil's Lake																												
Baxter's Hollow																												
WIDells				0				0	1	7		8				0				0				NC				NC
TOTAL	38	9	1	48	115	62	17	194	56	61	22	139	18	37	10	65	21	29	3	53	24	31	1	56	13	19		32
Vol. Hours				20				26				26				37				29				30				24
Grey Lines are for roosts not counted this year.																												