

# S U M M E R 2007



DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

**Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary**  
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## Eagles Attempt a Family at Sanctuary By Elaine Friebele

This winter, volunteers and staff spotted Bald Eagles flying above Otter Point and the Beaver Pond more often than in past years. Sometimes they were carrying branches in their talons. Then on February 28, volunteer Cynthia Bravo reported seeing a nest high up in a tree. This is the first in the history of the Sanctuary!

A corps of volunteers checked the nest every day from a safe distance. They often saw the female on the nest, watching them, but on many days, the female was positioned too low in the nest to be visible. She endured through all types of weather: rain, sleet, snow, and cold winds. Sometimes, another eagle (the mate?) was flying nearby.

Eagle's nests are huge: at least 4 feet wide and three feet deep; they can weigh several hundred pounds. The biggest nest ever recorded was 12 feet wide, 15 feet tall, and it weighed over 1,000 pounds! Females lay one to three eggs and incubate them for 35 days.

In early April—about the time that the eggs should have been hatching—an eagle took off from the nest tree, calling and circling as I approached the viewing site. After a few minutes, it perched on the highest snag nearby and continued its high-pitched cry, beak wide open. Soon, a second eagle took off from the nest. As the eagle circled overhead, I could see clearly the sharp, hooked yellow beak. I covered a little to think of being torn into little shreds by this weapon!

Eagles are from a universe beyond the normal-sized, the familiar. The eight- to 14 pound-adults are lifted into the air by the seven-foot wingspan. Large yellow scales cover the feet, which end with the fearsome talons.

Through the spring, volunteers continued to watch, observing the female on the nest, and sometimes, the male nearby, but no one saw the adults bringing prey to the nest. Had the eggs hatched? Were there hatchlings?

In late April, Cynthia observed an eagle flying in from the river and landing north of the nest. It seemed to call to the eagle sitting on the nest. The second eagle stepped out of the nest and flew in circles, landing close to the nest several times before once again settling down on the nest.

Following this observation, no activity was seen at the nest. We're still protecting the area surrounding the nest, in hopes that the nest was viable. Even if it wasn't, it's reassuring to know that eagles are attracted to Jug Bay's quiet, seclusion, and abundance for raising their families.

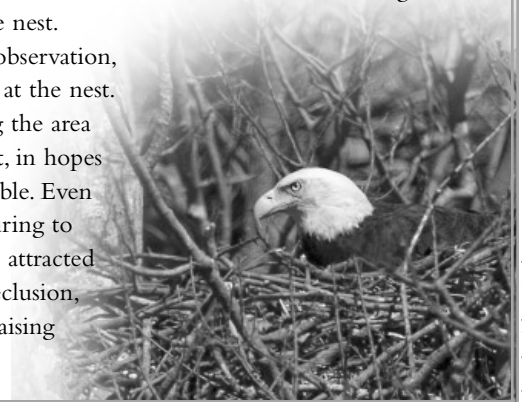


Photo by Ariene Ripley