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Ohio city on lookout for eagles' nest intruders

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 By **James Hannah, Associated Press Writer**

DAYTON, Ohio — The bird-watchers themselves are being watched.

Officials in this western Ohio city have installed a surveillance camera near the nest of some bald eagles and their young to try to keep overly eager onlookers from trespassing on the city's water well fields.

The two adult eagles and their two eaglets have taken up residence on one of the fields, renovating the old nest of a red-tailed hawk in a sycamore tree.

The family has an active following among dedicated birders, who peer through binoculars from a designated area. But word of the birds has drawn a bit of a crowd, and some people have tried to get an up-close look by walking onto the well field, which is a "No Trespassing" zone.

To better watch for intruders, the city last month installed a sophisticated \$34,000 zoom lens observation camera that is always on.

"It's been useful. We have had trespassers," Martha Schwendeman, manager of the city's division of water supply and treatment, said Thursday.

Schwendeman said the primary purpose of the camera is to keep people away from the well fields, which are sensitive to pollutants and pose a safety hazard because of electric generators and steep-sloped ponds.

"But by protecting the water supply, we are also protecting the eagles," she said. "It's a win-win."

Eagles can be sensitive to human interlopers, whose close presence can thwart breeding, nesting and carrying for baby eaglets.

"Security is high around nesting areas due to the fact that although the birds have proven by nesting in such a suburban area they will put up with human activity, it has to be at a distance," said Kathy Garza-Behr, spokeswoman for the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

In Maine, several Web cams have been installed near eagles' nests so that people can observe them from home.

"There is a sensitive period for eagles where you could really impact their productivity if you're in the area," said Chris DeSorbo, director of the raptor program for the Bio Diversity Research Institute of Gorham, Maine.

DeSorbo said people who get too close to eagles can keep them from breeding or cause them to abandon their nest and their young, who need their parents for warmth and food and even to shield them from the sun on hot days.

Garza-Behr said aircraft are also restricted from flying above the nests in Dayton because eagles can perceive a plane or helicopter as a predator bird and try to attack, posing a danger to both the eagle and the aircraft.

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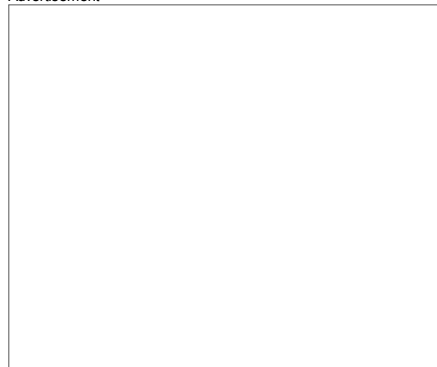
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