For Immediate Release

Contact: Ed Hahn
507.429.6416
ed@nationaleaglecenter.org

SEARCHING FOR GOLD
National Eagle Center to Lead Volunteers on 17th Annual Golden Eagle Count

Wabasha, MN (Dec. 3, 2021) The National Eagle Center will once again lead a group of citizen scientists on a quest to count the number of golden eagles in a three-state area on Saturday, January 15.

The mid-winter count, conducted by the Center each January for the past 17 years, sends volunteer observers out through portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa to help estimate the migratory population of the golden eagles that spend winters in the region. The survey recorded more than 120 golden eagles in the region in 2021.

“It wasn’t until the past 25 years that we discovered golden eagles spending time in this part of the United States,” said Scott Mehus, Director of Education at the National Eagle Center and Golden Eagle Survey Coordinator. “Unlike bald eagles that spend time wintering along the river where they fish for food, golden eagles reside in the bluffs and feed on prey such as wild turkeys, rabbits, and more. In the past two decades of studying the birds we have learned so much, and participating in the survey is a great way for eagle enthusiasts to learn about the golden eagle and see it first hand.”

In 2021, nearly 200 volunteers joined the survey effort which involved 71 routes, 40 counties, three states, and covered 5,800 miles. Aside from its stated objective of counting Golden Eagles, the survey also counts other winter raptors including Bald Eagles, hawks, and falcons.

“The survey helps us gain a better understanding of our winter raptor populations,” said Mehus. “In a typical year, our surveyors count well over 1,000 Bald Eagles and hundreds of hawks and falcons in addition to Goldens. We process and track all that data. The survey is an exceptional way to experience raptors and the outdoors”
The size of the survey has steadily grown over the years and is open to the public. First-time surveyors are required to attend basic training workshops prior to the survey date. Anyone wishing to join as a volunteer is encouraged to email golden@nationaleaglecenter.org to sign up.

For additional details about the Golden Eagle Project and the 17th Annual Golden Eagle Survey, visit the National Eagle Center Golden Eagle Project.

Background on Bald and Golden Eagles

Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles are the only native eagle species in North America. While Bald Eagles are found widely across the continent, Golden Eagles were long believed to only reside in the western states and portions of Canada, with only a small eastern population found around Quebec. With the discovery of Goldens migrating to portions of the central and eastern portions of the United States, scientists are learning more about their population, migration, and habitat requirements.

One geographic feature linked to Golden Eagles are “goat prairies” or “upland prairies”, those open, south-facing sides of bluffs free of forestation. They represent prime hunting habitat, but less than 1% of this unique habitat remains today from its historical presence. Prairie restoration through controlled burning is becoming more common as conservation activity increases.

About the National Eagle Center

The National Eagle Center is a landmark interpretive center located in Wabasha, MN and is the world’s premiere resource for impactful eagle education and experiences. It is currently closed for renovation and will reopen to visitors in Spring 2022. For more information, visit nationaleaglecenter.org.