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This is part of an occasional series by the Sanpete County Travel and Heritage Council on the people and places along U.S. Highway 89.



State Bald Eagle Day Set for Feb. 4 in Sanpete County Annual Event to be Held in Fountain Green.

Circle Feb. 4 on your calendar. It's the state Division of Wildlife Resource's annual Bald Eagle Day and Sanpete County's visitors and residents will get a chance to see the magnificent birds their natural habitat.

The free public event will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Fountain Green State Fish Hatchery, located one mile north of Fountain Green. A sign will be posted along the main roadways directing people to an access road that leads to the hatchery. Similar events are being held throughout the state the same day.

"It's the best place in the region to see bald eagles," Scott Root, information manager for the Division of Wildlife Resource's Central Region, says of the Fountain Green site. "There is one tree in particular there where we have seen 40 or more bald eagles at a time."

Root will be at the hatchery throughout the day and there will also be displays, pamphlets and other materials about bald eagles available. Spotting scopes will also be set up at each viewing site, and people available to help viewers spot eagles and to answer any questions. Those interested in photographing eagles should have a telephoto lens, as some of the eagles may be some distance from the viewing areas.

"We'll also give people maps of places nearby that they can drive to and observe eagles," he says.

People can expect to see eagles during the late morning and early afternoon but not as many as just before sundown, when eagles "go to roost" for the evening. At most of the sites, the best time to see the greatest number of eagles is usually from 2 to 4 p.m.



The state division started Bald Eagle Day in 1990 as a way to introduce people to Utah's wildlife. Since then, it has grown into Utah's most well-attended and enjoyed wildlife-viewing event.

"This day is one of my favorite parts of my job,"

Root says, adding a lot of people come back year after year. "We give out Bald Eagle Day buttons, and it's a big deal to some people. They drive out just to get the new button. We also get a lot of people from the larger cities who like to drive out to the country for the day. There are also a lot of first-timers, and those are my favorite people. There is so much for them to learn about the birds."

For example, Root says a lot of people don't know that bald eagles don't develop their trademark white heads and tails until they are four to five years of age. As well, many are surprised by the birds' eating habits. "They are not proud animals," Root says with a laugh. "If there is a pond with fish, they will swoop down to get one, but they are also happy to feed on dead sheep, rabbit or deer."

Bald eagles typically winter in Utah, gathering in regions throughout the state from about November to March. "February seems to be the peak time," Root says. "After March, they tend to fly on to Alaska or to the Northwest Territories."

For more information about Bald Eagle Day, call Scott Root at 801-491-5656.

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