

# Raptors Return in 2011!



Photo: Terry Walsh

Winter 2012 Raptor Report

## BY THE NUMBERS...

11

Number of raptor species that have nested on Larimer County parks and open spaces since 2005.

800

Estimated weight (lbs.) of the bald eagle nest that blew down on the Three Bell I conservation easement. Eagles rearrange and add material to a nest each year causing them to weigh as much as a ton.

193

Number of volunteer hours logged monitoring raptor nests for Larimer County in 2011.

**The findings are in:** raptors continue to call Larimer County's parks and open spaces home. Research conducted by trained volunteers began in early 2011, when raptors relocated nests and prepared to mate. Active nests were observed on Pinewood Reservoir County Park and Long View, River Bluffs, Red Mountain, Devil's Backbone, and Eagle's Nest open spaces. Two additional nests, a golden eagle and bald eagle nest, were also monitored on properties adjacent to Chimney Hollow and River Bluffs open spaces. In total, eight raptor nests and one raven nest were active on or adjacent to Larimer County's parks and open spaces.



*An osprey pair prepare their nest for the mating season.  
(Photo: Lou Hegedus)*

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# Results

Active nests were found on every park or open space monitored in 2011.

Park or Open Space	Species	General Location	Fledglings
Chimney Hollow*	Golden Eagle	Eastern Cliff Bands	3
Devil's Backbone	Raven	Keyhole Area	5
Eagle's Nest	Golden Eagle	Eagle's Nest Rock	0
Long View	Red-tailed Hawk	Ditch Cottonwoods	1
Pinewood Reservoir	Osprey	Southwestern Shoreline	2
Red Mountain	Prairie Falcon	Bent Rock Canyon	3
Red Mountain	Golden Eagle	Boxelder Creek Canyon	0
River Bluffs	Red-tailed Hawk	Poudre Riparian Area	0
Three Bell I CE	Bald Eagle	Poudre Riparian Area	0

\*Golden eagle nest is located east of Chimney Hollow Open Space.

The diversity of species is down from previous years, when as many as 11 species were viewed nesting. In 2011, just five raptor species (bald eagle, golden eagle, red-tailed hawk, osprey and prairie falcon) and one raven pair were observed nesting on protected lands. Swainson's hawk, great horned owl, barn owl, American kestrel, long-eared owl, and turkey vulture are all species that previously nested on open spaces but were not observed this year. Some of these species previously nested at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional

Open Space; but, since this property was transferred to Fort Collins in 2010, it was not monitored by Larimer County volunteers.

Five of the nine nests were successful with a total of nine fledgling raptors and five ravens surviving. The golden eagle nest east of Chimney Hollow Open Space produced three fledgling eagles, the largest clutch size ever observed from this nest. Prairie falcons returned to nest in Red Mountain Open Space's Bent Rock Canyon and produced three healthy chicks. The osprey platform at Pinewood Reservoir was successful once again, producing two chicks. Finally, a nesting pair of red-tailed hawks at Long View Farm reared one chick.

## Three Bells' Eagles Get a Helping Hand

A severe windstorm was too much for the hefty bald eagle nest on the Three Bell I conservation easement as it snapped a tree branch and fell to the ground in June. The eagles don't occupy the nest this time of year, so they weren't injured, but the nest had to be rebuilt or risk the birds relocating or not reproducing. Fortunately, Jerry Craig, a retired Colorado Division of Wildlife Raptor Biologist, stepped in and rebuilt the nest.

Jerry worked with Larimer County, the landowner, an arborist, and Poudre Valley REA to borrow a bucket truck and replace the nest. The nest was rebuilt, using many of the original materials, and relocated in the same tree about 50 feet off the ground. In mid



January Jerry reported the eagles were roosting nearby and rearranging sticks in the nest. All signs indicate they're settling in for another nesting season.