

Fort Riley Nesting Bald Eagles

There are currently five pairs of nesting Bald Eagles on or near the Fort Riley Military Installation. The Kansas River confluence nest was first discovered in the Fall of 2009. This is the pair's fifth actual nesting attempt, and the pair has fledged eaglets three out of the last four years. The pair has built nests in four different locations and all within several hundred yards of each other. This year, they abandoned the Fort Riley Cemetery site in a Sycamore tree and relocated several hundred yards upstream on the Smoky Hill River. The new nest site was built in a cottonwood tree along the west bank of the Smoky Hill which is no longer on Fort Riley property.

It wasn't long ago that seeing a bald eagle was rare in the state. In 1989, the first active nest was documented in Kansas at the Clinton Reservoir. The number of active nests have continued to climb annually. It is estimated that there are currently around 80 nesting pairs in the state. Wildlife Biologists here at Fort Riley monitor nesting activity, and conduct roost and diurnal surveys throughout the winter when eagle numbers are at their greatest. Despite their amazing recovery from near extinction, bald eagles are still in need of protection.



TAKE A
LOOK
INSIDE
THE
NEST!



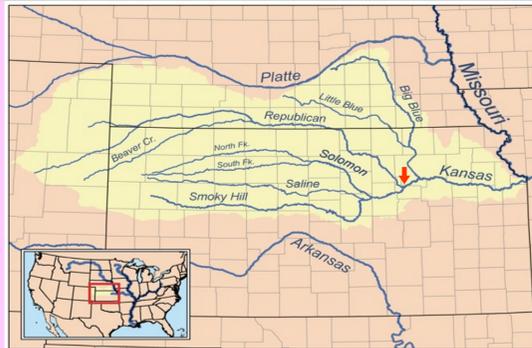
BALD EAGLE BIOLOGY

- Adults are distinguished by a white head & tail feathers.
- Adult plumage (white head & tail feathers) is obtained after about four years of age.
- Weigh up to 14 lb. (♂~10 lb.)
- Wing Span ~8 ft. (♂~6 ft.)
- Opportunistic feeders (mainly fish).
- Migratory
- Congregate near open water in tall trees for spotting prey and night roost for sheltering. (Winter)
- Bald Eagles require a good food base, perching areas, and nesting sites.
- Life span is ~25-30 yrs.



The Kansas River

The Kansas River, also known as the Kaw River, is formed by the confluence of the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers at Junction City and is joined by the Big Blue River near Manhattan. Flowing east into the Missouri River at Kansas City for a distance of about 170 miles (275 km), the Kansas drains an area of 61,300 square miles (158,770 square km), including northern Kansas and parts of southern Nebraska and eastern Colorado. Playing a prominent part in the exploration of the west, the river derives its name from the Kanza or Kaw tribe of Indians, which lived on its banks for hundreds of years. The early history of Fort Riley is closely tied to the movement of people and trade along the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails and the Kansas River confluence. These routes, a result of the United States doctrine of "Manifest Destiny" in the middle of the 19th century, prompted increased American military presence for the protection of American interests in this largely unsettled territory. During the 1850s, a number of military posts were established at strategic points to provide protection along these arteries of emigration and commerce. In the fall of 1852, a surveying party under the command of Captain Robert Chilton, 1st U.S. Dragoons, selected the junction of the Republican and Smoky Hill Rivers as a site for one of these forts. This location, approved by the War Department in January 1853, offered an advantageous location from which to organize, train and equip troops in protecting the overland trails. Surveyors believed the location near the center of the United States and named the site, Camp Center. During the late spring, three companies of the 6th Infantry occupied the camp and began construction of temporary quarters. On June 27, 1853, Camp Center became Fort Riley—named in honor of Maj. Gen. Bennett C. Riley who had led the first military escort along the Santa Fe Trail in 1829. The "fort" took shape around a broad plain that overlooked the Kansas River valley.



THE BALD EAGLE NEST HAS MOVED!

It's not uncommon for eagles to build more than one nest within their nesting territory. Below is a brief history of eagle nest movement on Fort Riley:

Kansas Confluence Nest Sites - 4 nests built in 5 years

2009/2010-First nest discovered in Cottonwood tree ~ 1/2 mi. downstream of KS River

Confluence. Nest was unsuccessful (destroyed by storm).

2010/2011-Built new nest in Sycamore tree on Kansas River bank 100 yards from original site.

First successful nest and again had successful nest in 2011/2012 at same location.

2012/2013-Built new nest in Sycamore tree near Main Post Cemetery. Nest was successful.

2013/2014-Built new nest in Cottonwood on west side of Smoky Hill River. Nest is active.

Madison Creek Nest Sites - 3 nests built in 11 year span and have bounced back and forth.

2004 built nest #1, 2005 built nest #2, 2006 built nest #3 but used #1,

2007-2013 back in nest #2 with many successful years, 2014 rebuilt nest at #3 site and is currently an active nest.



Juvenile Bald Eagle (~ 3 yrs.)



Adult Bald Eagle (~ 5 yrs.)



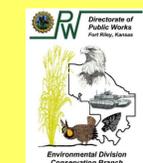
Bald Eagle Chick (~ 7 weeks)



Bald Eagle Chicks (~ 1 week)

To learn more about the Bald Eagles here at Fort Riley, please visit

www.fortriley.isportsman.net



When viewing and photographing Bald Eagles, be careful not to get too close. Repeated disturbances could drive the birds from desirable feeding, perching, nesting, or roosting areas. Not only is this unethical, it is illegal. Bald Eagles are protected by several federal laws including the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Anyone who disturbs or harms a Bald Eagle may be assessed a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and/or given a one-year jail sentence.