



Sighting Bald Eagles in Summit County

LANDED

PATRICK CONE

First of all, let's clear up a common misunderstanding. They're not bald. In days of yore "bald" meant "white," not "hairless." With that clarification, just a bit of additional information, and some field glasses, it should be easy to spot bald eagles in overhead flight or lounging at their favorite resting spots in Summit County.

According to Bill Fenimore of the Wild Bird Center in Layton, about 2,500 bald eagles make Utah their home from mid-October through mid-March, with several hundred wintering in Summit County, especially near bodies of water where they can indulge their fish-eating habits. "Echo Reservoir, Rockport State Park and Jordanelle [Reservoir] are good areas for viewing," said Fenimore. Pat Cone, Oakley-based photographer and long-time Summit County resident adds, "I've seen them in the tall cottonwoods along the Weber River, and north of Wanship along the rail trail to Coalville."

THE EAGLES HAVE

The bald eagle ranges from Alaska and Canada to northern Mexico. With a wingspan from 70 to 90 inches, migrating eagles fly at speeds averaging 30 miles per hour. They use thermals to help them soar, as well as updrafts generated by terrain such as valley edges or mountain slopes, resulting in very little wing-flapping. "They soar on long flat wings with the primaries readily identifiable on the wing tips, separated like fingers that are spread out," said Fenimore.

While Fenimore says the eagles are best viewed resting in trees during the afternoon, when the sun has burned off any mist or fog, Cone says they tend to gather around the entrance to Rockport State Park, where the Weber River enters the reservoir, around 10:00 a.m. "It seems like they're getting together for their morning coffee and a chat before they head off to work catching some fish," joked Cone. ✨ — By Sedona Callahan