Lake Billy Chinook's 12th annual Eagle Watch set for Feb. 24-25

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Eagle Watch 2007 will celebrate one of Oregon's largest gatherings of winter migratory bald eagles Feb. 24-25 at locations around Lake Billy Chinook Reservoir. The 12th annual event will feature speakers, activities and organized viewing sessions from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, and again on Sunday, Feb. 25, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. According to event coordinator Paul Patton of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), not all of the eagles present are guests. "Lake Billy Chinook has eight pairs of year-round resident bald eagles," explained Patton. "Each year between January and March, they're joined by migrant birds primarily from Canada and Alaska. Their arrival resents a spectacular chance to observe and learn about these majestic raptors." Event organizers will present a viewing orientation at PGE's Round Butte Overlook Park before the first of two Saturday eagle viewing sessions at Overlook Park and other selected viewpoints around the lake. The first viewing session will be from 10-11:30 a.m.; the second from 1:30-3 p.m. Raptor experts from throughout the region will give interpretive presentations before and after the second session. Early risers can get a head start on Sunday's viewing activities by joining the annual Sunrise Eagle Tour beginning at 5:30 a.m. at The Cove Palisades State Park. The special tour is sponsored by Raven Research West. Other activities will provide educational experiences both days at Portland General Electric's (PGE) Overlook Park. "We have a vast array of fascinating activities that appeal to all age and interest levels," said PGE park operations manager Tony Dentel. "Veteran raptor biologists and those seeing their first eagles can enjoy the experience in a relaxed atmosphere." The Overlook Park activities include: â€¢ A presentation on the dramatic recovery of the bald eagle and its possible de-listing from the Endangered Species List at 1 p.m. Saturday and 10:30 a.m. Sunday; â€¢ Live birds-of-prey programs presented by Wild Wings Raptor Rehabilitation of Sisters on both days; â€¢ A two-day exhibit of the works of central Oregon artist John Finch, including pencil drawings of both wildlife and Native American scenes; â€¢ A Saturday astronomy presentation, "The Wonders of the Night Sky," by the Sunriver Nature Center beginning at 7 p.m., followed by stargazing, weather permitting; â€¢ A raptor identification contest and special Native American cultural program sponsored by Warm Springs Power Enterprises Sunday from 1:30-2:30 p.m. Event activities will conclude at 2:30 p.m. with a grand prize drawing and event summary at Overlook Park, but eagle viewing opportunities will continue at viewpoints in The Cove Palisades State Park until 5 p.m., and at Smith Rock State Park, nine miles northeast of Redmond, from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Admission to all Eagle Watch activities is free. The Cove Palisades State Park offers year-round camping. Campsite and log cabin reservations can be made by calling 1-800-452-5687. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs join PGE and OPRD as primary sponsors of the annual event. "Eagle Watch is a time to gather together and share in the natural, cultural and spiritual significance that the eagle represents," said Robert "Bobby" Brunoe, Natural Resource General Manager for the Tribes. Other event sponsors are The Oregon Eagle Foundation, Inc.; the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Oregon State University; the Crooked River National Grassland; The Museum at Warm Springs; the Bureau of Land Management; the United States Department of Fish and Wildlife; Sage Science; the Madras-Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce; the Audubon Society; Earth2O; and the Telephone Pioneers of America. For more information on Eagle Watch 2007, call the Oregon State Parks Information Center at 1-800-551-6949, or The Cove Palisades State Park, 541-546-3412. Event details also are posted at www.oregonstateparks.org.