**Eagles on the Golf Course? We Hope You Can Settle for This Kind. . . .**

March 15 — The Eagles have landed, again. For at least the fifth consecutive year, Bald Eagles are starting a family in the nest just southeast of the golf course property. I observed definite nesting activity three times in the past week-plus, activity that includes the clear sighting of an adult Eagle sitting, almost motionless, in the nest for half an hour or more, the best sign of all.

Bald Eagles, as you might know, generally use the same nest every year, adding on and doing repairs in midwinter, then usually copulating and starting to lay eggs by February or early March. So after a few weeks of distant sightings but no nest action, it turns out we’re right on time again this year.

Eagle nests are protected by law. (Seriously, and disturbing them can be a felony — because of how fragile their populations were for decades. Their comeback from the endangered lists is one of the great success stories in all of nature; we can elaborate in another post.) So divulging the exact location of this or any nest is discouraged. More so than many other breeding birds, Balds are very sensitive to human intrusion in the general ballpark of their nests, so I and my binoculars never get inside of 100 yards from their very tall nest tree. Which very tall tree? We’ll just say that if you’re on the 15th tee on the golf course, you’re close, but not too close.

On one of my visits to a viewing spot in early March, the mom Eagle hoisted herself out of the nest, perched on a branch just next to it, and gave a few of the surprisingly high-pitched, squeaky alarm calls that Eagles do — but the whole time, she stared, “eagle-eyed,” straight down to where I was. She was clearly sensitive to my presence, but her expression was as fierce as you’d expect from our national bird. I got the message, impressively, and got myself out of there.

Bald Eagles build the biggest nests of any North American bird (there are reports of some that weigh close to two tons), and ours is a typical beast of a structure. Balds lay 1 to 3 eggs per year. Average time from laying to hatching eggs is 30 to 40 days; after that, it could be 10 to 12 weeks until the babes fledge (meaning fly off to fend for themselves). So if all goes well, we can estimate that the hatchlings will be flying out to join us by late May or June.

**—Tom Walsh**

*NEXT: A look at what we hope will be our other raptor nesting site on the course this spring — by the very visible Red-tailed Hawks.*