

# Alton to Host Free Eagle Ice Festival on 1/6 with Tours, Activities and More

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
January 3 2024 2:27 PM



ALTON/WEST ALTON - This year's annual Eagle Ice Festival invites Riverbend residents to enjoy raptor meet-and-greets, eagle-watching tours, food trucks and more on Saturday, Jan. 6, 2024.

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., you can stop by FLOCK, the National Great Rivers Museum and the Audubon Center at Riverlands for many eagle-themed activities, most of which are free. The Eagle Ice Fest encourages people to engage with nature and connect to the wildlife in the area.

“It’s a combination of a bunch of different organizations bringing free resources to people so that not only are they getting an education, especially about eagles, but they’re learning about all these resources that they have in the area that they can go out and hike here or they can go learn about the dam,” explained Ashley Lockwood, an educator with the Audubon Center. “I know it’s a big draw to the area, so that’s something that I think a lot of people are embracing.”

Lockwood pointed out that while most people want to “hunker down inside” during winter months, this is actually “one of the absolute best times” to be outside in nature, especially since the colder temperatures bring more big birds to the Riverbend area.

[FLOCK](#) will host several food trucks that day. They will also have fire pits and s’mores kits available, and attendees can check out ice carvers, get their faces painted or pose for pictures with eagles.

The Alton Visitor’s Center will offer eagle-watching shuttle tours for \$15; you can [purchase tickets online](#). The Lewis and Clark Confluence Tower will also be open for tours throughout the day.

A mile away, the [National Great Rivers Museum](#) will have several activities. Visitors can use spotting scopes to see nesting eagles, watch films about eagles and vote for a winner in the Winter on the River Photography Contest. You can also take a tour to the top of the Melvin Price Locks and Dam, where you’re more likely to spot an eagle.

At the [Audubon Center](#), you can walk the trails and enjoy educational activities. The Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, which is part of the center, will have many eagles, swans and fowl that you can see up close as you walk through the property. The center is also offering free eagle meet-and-greets and \$10 guided bird hikes.

“We will have different activities for families to come out and learn about, say, the wingspan of a bird or how strong they are,” Lockwood said. “I know that is a big deal throughout the Riverbend area, and we see thousands of people coming out here to the sanctuary on that day. So it’s going to be a very busy event. But we’re also really, really excited because it helps to get our messaging out there and it helps people to realize that this is their land, it’s public land, and it’s open from sunrise to sunset for them any day of the year.”

Jacoby Arts Center will also host a winter vendor fair on Saturday, and It’s Raining Zen will give away free stone eagle figurines to the first 70 children ages 12 and under who come to the store.

The festival is presented by Phillips 66 Wood River. For more information about the Eagle Ice Festival and where to find activities, food trucks, tours and eagles, visit the [Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau website at RiversAndRoutes.com](http://RiversAndRoutes.com). Check out the [Eagle Ice Festival webpage](#) for details.

“It puts a big smile on all of our faces,” Lockwood added. “It’s probably the biggest celebration of the year that we have to say, ‘This is our heritage of the area. This is why we’re here. This is why we’re protecting the land.’ So I think that it really takes us back to our roots.”