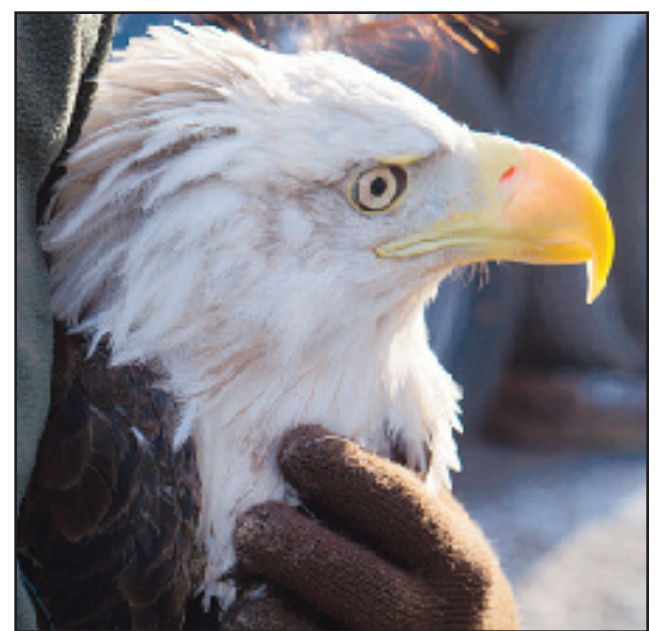


# SAUK PRAIRIE **Star**

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People from near and far attended "Bald Eagle Watching Days," on Jan. 13 and 14 to see the iconic birds. Above, a close look at a rehabilitated female eagle before she was released back into the wild Saturday. Left, Frank Stout, Carole Helmer and Mary Stout drove from surrounding areas to come to the event. They endured the cold and stopped at the Ferry Bluff Eagle Council Overlook to observe several eagles flying over the Wisconsin River. For more photos from the events, see page 20.

PHOTOS BY ERIN VANDER WEELE

## 'Eagle Watching Days' draws crowd

### *Three rehabilitated bald eagles return to the wild*

by ERIN VANDER WEELE  
Editor

The release of three rehabilitated bald eagles brought thousands of people to Veterans Memorial Park on Jan. 14 as part of Sauk Prairie's 30th annual "Bald Eagle Watching Days."

The first eagle released on the

chilly Saturday afternoon was an adult female found near death while suffering from acute lead poisoning. The eagle fully recovered under care of the staff at Raptor Education Group, an Antigo-based non-profit dedicated to the rehabilitation of birds.

"You're going to be flying pretty soon, sweetheart," said

Raptor Education Group executive director Marge Gibson as she prepared to release the beautiful eagle back into the wild. The crowd cheered as the eagle took flight, freely soaring over the Wisconsin River.

The second eagle released was an adult male recovered from being kicked by a mother deer protecting her fawn. The

third was an immature female eagle recovered from an injured wing.

Gibson first walked around holding each eagle to allow attendees to see the iconic birds. The event is a rare opportunity for people to see the eagles up close.

"I love to be able to show everybody close what they're

like," Gibson said. "If you're able to look them in the eye, you'll never take them for granted again."

The Raptor Education Group cares for about 100 ill, orphaned or injured eagles a year and returns to the Sauk Prairie area annually to release eagles along the Wisconsin River as part of "Bald Eagle Watching Days."

The Ferry Bluff Eagle Council, Sauk Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce, Wisconsin DNR, Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation, and Tripp Heritage Museum proudly are part of "Bald Eagle Watching Days," which also offers a variety of educational programs about eagles and other animals.



## State's economy shows slow, steady growth

by ERIN VANDER WEELE  
Editor

When Dr. Steven Deller presented during the 2017 Economic Outlook program at the River Arts Center Jan. 11, he said Wisconsin's economy continues to grow slowly, but steadily.

Deller returned to Sauk Prairie to speak on the economic trends of Sauk County and Wisconsin as part of the annual program provided by the Bank of Prairie du Sac and Sauk Prairie Chamber of Commerce.

"We're growing, but not as fast as the national economy," said Deller, an economist and University of Wisconsin-Madison professor.

He compared Wisconsin to surrounding states and the U.S., examining wages, unemploy-

ment, job growth, and inflation. In coming out of the recession, wages and salaries in Wisconsin are growing at a slower rate compared to other states, but he said the state is "doing okay." However, the job growth rate is much slower.

"In terms of jobs, we didn't do very well," Deller said. Dane and Sauk County are below 3 percent for the average unemployment rate in 2016.

"That's a labor shortage," Deller said. "Whenever you get unemployment rates that low, that means that there really is a shortage of labor."

He explained the job sectors growing are in mining, agriculture, fishing and hunting, and noted manufacturing is no longer the backbone of the state's economy.

"The growth is in the service

sector, not in the goods sector," he said.

Deller went more in depth to talk about why Wisconsin employment growth is lagging behind other states. Through his work, he has found small firms are the engine of job growth.

"The only group that is consistently adding net jobs, which is the difference between creating jobs and destroying jobs, are new startup businesses, and they tend to be small," he said. Over 90 percent of job creation comes from businesses with less than 500 employees, he said. Roughly half of jobs created are the smaller business, less than 20 employees.

"The problem though, is Wisconsin really is doing very poorly in terms of new business start ups," he said. "I think that's why Wisconsin is lagging be-

hind in terms of job growth."

"We need to shift the focus, and we need to start focusing more on smaller businesses," he added.

In looking to the future, the economy forecast is growing and picking up, however, Deller again noted from a historical aspect, it's going to be slow, but steady. He also said inflation and interest rates should tick upward, and the chance of a return to a recession in 2017 is modest.

### Panel presentations

This year, instead of using a video to look at the economic development in Sauk Prairie as done in prior years, local leaders came together to form a panel and share the changes in their communities.

The panel included Sauk City village administrator Vicki Breunig, Town of Prairie du Sac board member Janine Godfriaux-Leystra, Merrimac town administrator Tim McCumber, Merrimac village administrator Ron Senger, Sauk County chair Marty Krueger, Prairie du Sac village administrator Alan Wildman, Sauk Prairie School District superintendent Cliff Thompson, and Sauk Prairie Healthcare interim CEO Carol May.

Breunig spoke about the six new businesses in Sauk City including Wood BBQ and the groundbreaking of Vintage Brewery. There will also be construction on Phillips Blvd. to house Dunkin' Donuts and Milio's Sandwiches with a plan

— SEE ECONOMY, PAGE 7



## Sharing stories about 'Eagle Watching Days'

Gene Unger, incoming president of Ferry Bluff Eagle Council and John Keefe, outgoing president of Ferry Bluff, were guest speakers at the Jan. 11 Optimist meeting. Gene told the members about the new committees that were formed in order to get more information out to the public about the Council. Both Unger and Keefe had interesting stories about past "Eagle Watch Days." Check them out on Facebook. Pictured are Optimist president Bill Campbell, Keefe and Unger.

The Sauk Prairie Optimist Club meets every Wednesday, the first Wednesday of the month at noon and the remaining Wednesdays at 7 a.m. at the Blue Spoon Café in Prairie du Sac. Everyone welcome. Watch for the club's new and improved website coming soon. You can find the Optimists on Facebook.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

## CAFE CONNECTIONS MENU

- Monday, Jan. 23** – angel food cake, roll. Goulash, spinach, pie, roll. Café Connections is located at the Sauk Prairie Community Center at 730 Monroe Street in Sauk City Mondays through Fridays at 11:30 a.m. The Merrimac Dining Center is located at the Merrimac Village Hall at 100 Cook Street on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at Noon. Interested persons can call 608-355-3289 ext. 3343 for more information.
- Tuesday, Jan. 24** – Marinated pork roast, baked beans, baby carrots, banana cake.
- Wednesday, Jan. 25** – Breaded chicken on bun, squash casserole, buttered corn, rice pudding.
- Thursday, Jan. 26** – Fried fish, cheesy broccoli rice, combread, fruit mix.
- Friday, Jan. 27** – Herbed pork cubes, new potatoes, herbed green beans, frosted

## CAFE CONNECTIONS ACTIVITIES

- Visit with friends, read a book, newspaper, or magazine. Stay for lunch, sit back, and enjoy a cup of coffee! Café opens and coffee is available at 9:30 a.m.
  - Monday** – Lunch at 12 p.m.; Card Bingo at 12:30 p.m.; Chicken Feet Dominoes at 2 p.m.
  - Tuesday** - Lunch at 11:30 a.m.; Euchre/Bridge at 1 p.m.
  - Wednesday** – Lunch at 11:30 a.m.
  - Thursday** - Memory Café (Third Thursday) at 9:30 a.m.; Lunch at 11:30 a.m.
  - Friday** - Lunch at 11:30 a.m.; Movies & Popcorn at 1 p.m.
- PLEASE NOTE, CHANGES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE STAR OFFICE ON TUESDAY OR WEDNESDAY.

## ECONOMY

FROM PAGE 1

to open in spring. Businesses have also expanded, including Consumer's Coop, Hooverson Funeral Home, Riviera Bowl and Pizzeria and La Mexicana renovations.

With the new brewery, the village is working on plans for Riverfront Park, looking to add seating and picnic areas along the riverway.

In the Village of Prairie du Sac, Wildman said the equalized value is up 18 percent since 2007 at \$386 million. The population has also increased two percent since the last Census.

New businesses include Pathway to Wellness Community Clinic, Windmill Pizzeria and Key to Life Chiropractic. Expanding businesses include EJ Movement, Sauk Prairie Ambulance Services, and the Rejuvenation Clinic of Sauk Prairie.

Also during the panel presentations, superintendent Thompson spoke about the growth in the school district. In the last 10 years, there is an average gradual growth pattern of about 10 new students per year.

## Great Sauk State Trail update

In his panel presentation, Sauk County chair Marty Krueger provided an update on the Great Sauk State Trail. He expects the design engineering by Jewell Associates Engineers to begin soon, and explained the process in regards to the project over the last several months.

Last month, he appeared before the state Natural Resources Board and asked for designation for the trail to be included in state trail system, which the board unanimously approved.

"The Department of Natural Resources expects that once this trail is hooked up to Devil's Lake State Park, it will be the most traveled and used state trail in the state," Krueger said. Last summer, the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad announced the decision to move the mileage marker for the conversion of the trail from the north side of the river into Dane County, to allow one filing with the Surface Transportation Board. Along with this filing,



Dr. Steven Deller spoke on economic trends of Sauk County and Wisconsin as part of the 2017 Economic Outlook program at the River Arts Center Jan. 11.

PHOTO BY ERIN VANDER WEELE

there needs to be another agreement with the DNR and Department of Transportation for the DNR to accept responsibility for the corridor.

However, last Labor Day weekend, the Sauk City railroad bridge moved five feet, and an inspection concluded pier 2 of the bridge needs to be removed,

which is estimated to cost \$900,000.

As a result, the DNR is reluctant to accept a corridor that includes the bridge. Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission and DOT are accepting responsibility for the bridge, but there currently is no funding. Recently, the DOT decided

there will be two filings to turn that corridor into a recreational trail, which would allow the project to move forward. In the meantime, the discussion on a solution for connection to Dane County and the Sauk City railroad bridge problem will proceed.

Krueger said they intend to

start construction in June and open at least segment 1 of the trail by Labor Day this year. The Highway Dept. will be principle responsibility for construction. "We are going to get this built," Krueger said. "We are going to build something that not only will you be able to use, but you'll be proud to be part of."

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# Scenes from 'Bald Eagle Watching Days'

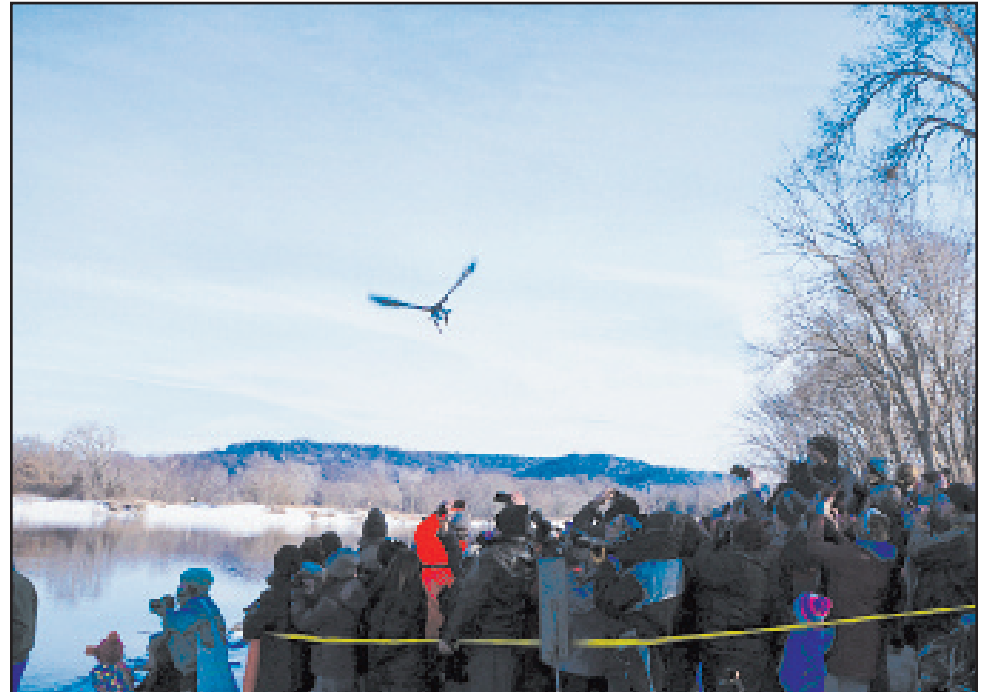


Above, left: Raptor Education Group executive director Marge Gibson shows the wing of an adult female eagle before she returned to the wild last Saturday. Above, right: Thousands attended to watch the rehabilitated bald eagles released from VFW Park in Prairie du Sac. Attendees enjoyed taking photos and videos of the eagles as Gibson walked each eagle around.

PHOTOS BY ERIN VANDER WEELE



There were several educational opportunities for children to learn about bald eagles, as well as other birds and animals. Above, left: An American Kestrel was one of the many birds the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center showed at the event. Above, right: David Stokes brought smiles to children's faces as he taught them about different animals in his "Laughing with the Animals" show.



On the left, a male bald eagle getting ready to take flight. The eagle is shown on the right soaring over the Wisconsin River just after his release.