

In quest for Eagle badge, Scout hopes to lure big birds to namesake slough

By [Mark Wilson](#)

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EVANSVILLE — At 65 feet tall and seven feet wide, it would be pretty difficult for a bald eagle to miss the nesting platform erected for them Tuesday at Eagle Slough Natural Area.

The nesting platform was the idea of 17-year-old Philip Lax, who took it on as the required project for earning his Eagle Scout badge — Boy Scouts' highest rank.

Lax enlisted the help of family, fellow Scouts, lumber donors and [Vectren](#).

“I wouldn't have been able to do this without Vectren,” he said.

The Evansville-based utility company donated a 75-foot wooden pole and the trucks and crew needed to sink it 10-feet deep near the banks of the nature area's pond, where it can be easily seen from a pond observation deck.

Supporters of the 127-acre wetland conservation project near the Ohio River in Vanderburgh County are hoping the platform will provide what the younger growth woods around it haven't so far — a suitable nesting spot for its namesake bird.

“We've got nests across the river, but here a lot of this ground was farmed as recently as 1960, and the trees are still young. They have to have an old, stable tree. They keep adding to the nest year after year,” said Grey Meyer, longtime supporter of the nature area.

Lax said he patterned his platform on one installed by Mike Wathen on his property near Poseyville, Ind., and then added his own features.

He used treated pine and rough cut cedar to build it over a two-day period. After being hauled by trailer to the nature area, volunteers helped Lax attach it to the utility pole. Dry grape vine cuttings were woven into its bottom and a Vectren crew raised it.

The grape vines were added to make it more attractive to any eagles looking for a home, Lax said. The birds will then build their own giant nests of sticks on it.

Lax said he is an avid birder, and he enjoys visiting the nature area to bird watch. He said he plans to check on the nest platform often to see if it has attracted any tenants.

Over the years, the nature area has been used for railroads, farming, excavating dirt for road construction, and most recently, as a site for illegal dumping, shooting and off-road vehicles.

Meyer said participants in a recent bird-watching hike watched as a bald eagle scooped up a fish from the slough's lake, so he knows they visit the area.

The slough is north of Ellis Park on Waterworks Road, east of U.S. 41 and south of Interstate 164.

The site was acquired and developed by a group of local nonprofit organizations and government agencies. In 2012, ownership was turned over to Sycamore Land Trust, a regional nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Southern Indiana's natural and agricultural heritage.

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