In the spring of 2017, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife completed its annual bald eagle nesting survey. The survey consists of flying five blocks that are roughly ten square miles each and looking for eagle nests in woodlots and along rivers. Two of the blocks, which are located around Sandusky Bay (Ottawa/Sandusky Counties) on Lake Erie and Mosquito Creek Wildlife Area (Trumbull County) in northeastern Ohio, are flown every year while the other three are rotated every year. In 2017, the other three blocks were located around Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge/Magee Marsh (Lucas/Ottawa Counties), along the Scioto River (Ross/Pike Counties), and along the Sandusky River (Seneca/Wyandot Counties). The survey is conducted in March, when eagles are incubating eggs. A follow-up survey is done in May to determine the number of young produced in active nests.

Biologists calculated, based on the survey of the sample areas, that there were approximately 221 eagle nests within the state, which was up slightly from 207 in 2016 (Figure 1). In the past five years, the estimate of number of nests has averaged 204 per year. The number of young this year was estimated at 312, which is above the five-year estimate of 293, but slightly lower than the estimate of 327 young in 2016.

Figure 1. Number of bald eagle nests in Ohio, 2000-2017.

Overall, bald eagles continue to flourish in Ohio. In recent years the breeding population seems to have stabilized, with only an average 3.5 % increase over the past 10 years. As a result of this success, management by the division remains minimal, with primary duties being working with rehabilitators that help injured birds recover, and enforcement of protective state and federal laws, such as the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.