



Red-tailed hawks' nest puts Utah pipeline on hold

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MAGNA, Utah (AP) - New neighbors have put plans for a natural gas pipeline on hold. A pair of red-tailed hawks established a home in a cottonwood tree that was in the path of a Kennecott Utah Copper's natural gas pipeline. The hawks are now parents to four chicks, who are just starting to branch out from the nest.

Kennecott Utah Copper says the company is gladly giving the family of birds the right of way.

"I have heard about the red-tailed hawk family in more than a dozen meetings with people asking how are the babies, how are the chicks?" Kennecott spokeswoman Jana Kettering said. "It's like we're protecting our own - and taking care of the wildlife on our land."

Ann Neville, the company's senior adviser for biological resources, said workers were walking the pipeline route when one of the hawks came screeching down out of the sky. She said the project manager called her to see what to do next, so she called the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for guidance.

"He basically said, 'We do not want you within a half-mile of the nest,'" Neville said, but added that he wanted to know if there were any eggs.

Workers carefully used a cherry picker to get a look at the nest, where they spotted four eggs in early May. The eggs hatched about three weeks ago and the chicks are just starting to get out of the nest a bit, but are still relying on the parent birds for food.

"We are working with fish and wildlife to determine what specific criteria they are looking for in nest fidelity," Neville said. "They may still hang around if there is a lot of food available, like lots of mice."

Neville said the pipeline's installation will depend on when the nest can be safely abandoned.

"At first, I think it caught everybody up short, and then once the workers realized what was going on, that the hawks were protected, they wanted to do the right thing," Neville said. "It's been so interesting to watch this, to document everything."

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