

Duck security on lookout for 'fowl' play



By [Nafari Vanaski](#)

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Chris Craychee woke up at 4:30 a.m. Wednesday to get ready for work. His shift at Point State Park started at 5:45 a.m.

When he got there, he made sure the park lights were on, checked the rope lines and power connections, kept an eye on the Allegheny River's water level and studied weather reports.

Then he settled in for a couple hours of face-to-beak time with the 40-foot-high duck he is charged with guarding.

You may have noticed that there's a gigantic, inflated, yellow duck in Pittsburgh. It's part of a worldwide exhibition of the artwork by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman.

The Rubber Duck is under 24-hour security because, well, a giant version of a popular bathtub toy bobbing in place next to the Point fountain is going to attract some attention. Craychee's main job is as project manager for Clear Story, the company overseeing the [Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's](#) Festival of Firsts. While the duck visits its first American city, Craychee keeps away those with less appreciation for art.

Around 4:30 a.m. on Oct. 2, a vandal sprayed some graffiti on a sidewalk near the duck. The person on duck watch spotted the suspect and called city police, who nabbed the suspect.

If Craychee isn't on duck patrol, another member of the Clear Story staff is present. Police also maintain a regular presence. No one is allowed to touch the duck, which is tied down offshore. Craychee debunked reports of people swimming out to touch the duck.

"Someone's making false claims on Twitter," he said. "Imagine that."

Craychee's main concern isn't vandalism or crowds. It's the elements.

Rain is like water off, yes, a duck's back. But if the rain gets too heavy or if the winds are too high, it could spell disaster.

Should severe weather detach the duck from its power source, the inflated exhibit could fall a bit flat. If the duck got loose from its bonds, it would be down the Ohio River without a paddle. That's unlikely, but Craychee said there are plans for everything that could go wrong.

Wednesday morning's shift had a little bit of everything for Craychee. As we spoke, a Pittsburgh River Rescue boat looked to be getting a bit too close to the duck. Craychee stopped talking to monitor the situation. The boat was retrieving a shoe that someone on shore had dropped.

Later, we were interrupted by a woman asking him to take a group photo.

"I do a lot of this, too," he told me. "It's fun."

The duck is scheduled to stay until Oct. 20, but would remain if the Pirates' winning season continued. (No, they are not going to put a giant jersey or hat on the duck. Would you paint a Bucs baseball cap on the Mona Lisa? Yes, you would?)

Craychee said he will be glad when his duck duty is over, but acknowledged he will miss it when it's gone.

"I have spent about half my time here," he said. "And I still feel warmly about the duck."