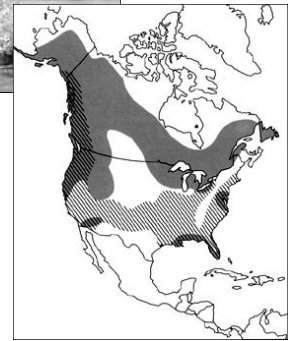


Bald Eagle



Order:
Falconiformes
Family:
Accipitridae
Species:
Haliaeetus
leucocephalus



Range: Native only to North America. They range from Alaska to the tip of Florida.

Habitat: Near fresh and salt water.

Description: A large eagle with brown feathers covering most of its body. After maturity, it develops a white head and tail which are brown as a juvenile. Its brown beak also changes to yellow. It has bare legs and feet with tiny hooks on the pads which are perfect for catching fish.

Reproduction: Like all eagles, they mate for life, only choosing another if their mate dies. The pair will use the same nest site every year. This nest is usually in a tree near water. The pair return to the nest and add more materials annually. The female lays one to three eggs, usually two. Both parents incubate the eggs and raise the young. Incubation is 35 days. They are full grown and fledge at 10-12 weeks of age. Like most raptors, only 20% of the fledglings will survive the first year.

Longevity: 20-25 years in the wild, 40-50 years in captivity.

Diet: Fish (80-90%), coots, small mammals, injured waterfowl

Fun Facts:

- 1) The largest known bald eagle nest is in Cape Canaveral, Florida. As of 1995 it was eight feet wide, twelve feet deep, and was estimated at two tons! The nest has been used for over 30 years. 15 years later, in 2010 the same nest is over 10ft wide and 20 feet deep and weighs almost 3 tons!
- 2) The bald eagle was chosen as our national symbol by the Second Continental Congress. They wanted a bird found only in North America, and that is why the golden eagle wasn't even an option. They narrowed it down to the bald eagle and the wild turkey. Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey. It took six years to decide on a symbol. The bald eagle was finally chosen on June 20, 1782.
- 3) Although it is legal for Native Americans to have eagle feathers, they must have proper permits and receive them through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We are not allowed to give out any feathers.
- 4) Bald eagles have made an amazing comeback. In 1782 estimated 100,000 BE in lower 48 states. By 1963 that number decreased to 417 nesting pairs! By 1982, our efforts increased it to 1,482 nesting pairs. By 1998, that number had grown to 5,748. As of 2007, there are about 9789 nesting pairs in the lower states alone... that's not including Alaska and Canada!
- 5) Bald eagles were down listed to *threatened* in 1995 and fully delisted June 2007.
- 6) Bald eagles have special hooks on the bottom of their feet for holding fish.
- 7) It is not true that a bald eagle cannot let go of a fish once it is grabbed.