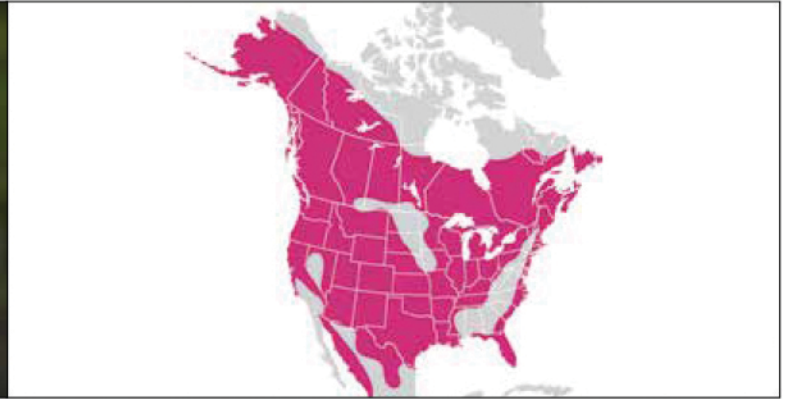


BALD EAGLE

updated March 2017



Range	Throughout much of the continental United States and Canada to northwestern Alaska; winters from southern Canada southward along major river systems of the interior
Habitat	Lakes, rivers, marshes and sea coasts
Diet (wild)	Primarily a fish eater; occasionally mice, rats, small mammals, game birds, waterfowl, and carrion
Diet (captivity)	Prey-based, including dead mice, rats, rabbits, occasional birds and fish
Description	Length: 28–38 inches; wingspan: 6–6½ feet; weight: 9–12 pounds. Females are larger than males. Large eagle with blackish body feathers, a white head and tail, and heavy yellow bill. Young birds lack the white head and tail and resemble adult golden eagles; their brown wings and bodies are mottled with white in varying amounts. The distinct white head and tail of the mature bird is developed between 4–6 years of age.
Lifespan	Wild: 10–30 years. Captivity: 20–40 years
Reproduction	The female lays 1–4 eggs that are incubated for 34–35 days. The male predominately provides food while the female stays near the nest to incubate. Males may spend some time incubating during nighttime hours. Young fledge between 12–16 weeks and reach maturity in 4–5 years. Elaborate courtship displays include cartwheels in the air and free falling while joined at the feet, letting go and flying away separately only moments before they would otherwise crash to the ground. They build large aeries (4–9 feet [1–3 meters] in diameter) and a pair will use the same nest year after year with additional sticks added to the original structure.
Behavior	When flying, eagles can reach speeds of up to 30 mph and can dive at speeds of up to 100 mph. The migratory behavior of bald eagles varies across their geographic ranges. Some populations only migrate locally for increased foraging opportunities and many southern populations do not migrate at all. Migratory birds from Canadian populations typically travel south to the United States during the winter; populations nesting in the Great Lakes region may move toward the Atlantic coast. Eagles follow seasonal food supplies; as lakes and streams freeze over, they must go south to find open fresh water or head to the coast, unless sufficient supplies of carrion are present. Bald eagles are often solitary, although they pair bond during the nesting season. However, groups of bald eagles may be seen in areas with ample prey and they may roost communally in large groups of up to 400 individuals. Bald eagles have relatively weak, high pitched, thin vocalizations, composed of chirps, whistles and harsh chatters. Although these birds do not have an adept sense of smell, they do avoid food items that taste spoiled.
Our animals	1 female, 2 males. Born (estimated): 01/1998 (female); 02/2005 and 01/2006 (males). Wild born in Michigan; injured and rehabilitated, but extent of injuries makes them unable to be released.
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The term “bald” may be from the Old English word “balde,” which meant white. • An eagle’s eye is almost as large as a human’s, but its sharpness is at least four times that of a person with perfect vision. What a human can see at 20 feet (6 meters), an eagle can see at 180 feet (55 meters). Eagles’ keen eyesight allows them to spot fish from a mile high in the sky. • It is estimated that in the early 18th century the U.S. bald eagle population was 300,000–500,000, but by the 1950s there were only 412 nesting pairs in the 48 contiguous states. • The bald eagle was listed as threatened on the U.S. Endangered Species list in every state except Alaska until June 28, 2007 (it was removed from the U.S. government’s list of endangered species in 1995.) Its recovering populations allowing it to be removed from the list are one of the major success stories of the conservation movement and the Endangered Species Act. Habitat destruction combined with chemical pesticides (principally DDT) was the main danger to these birds. The pesticides accumulated in the fat of the fish the eagles ate, causing thinning of eggshells. The banning of DDT in 1972 was likely the single greatest cause of increasing their numbers. • Bald eagles continue to be protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (originally passed in 1940). The act prohibits the taking, possession, sale, purchase, barter, offering to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, of any bald or golden eagle, alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg, unless allowed by permit.

Phylum
ChordataClass
AvesOrder
FalconiformesFamily
AccipitridaeGenus
Haliaeetusspecies
H. leucocephalus