

ANIMAL SECTION - BIRDS

BALD EAGLE

ABOUT

The Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) adult has a very dark brown body with a distinctive white head and tail and strong yellow beak. They do not have this coloring until about five years old, when their eyes and beak turn yellow too. Females are larger than males and weigh up to 15 pounds. Mature eagles are 29 to 42 inches long with a wingspan of six to eight feet. Bald Eagles live more than 30 years in the wild and mate for life, seeking a new partner only if one of the pair dies. Their large nests, lined with twigs, soft mosses, grasses and feathers, are called eyries, and are built at the top of tall, sturdy trees. The female lays 1-3 eggs each spring, which hatch after 35 days of incubation. The parents share caretaking responsibility for the eaglets until they are strong enough to fly. The Bald Eagles that live in the northern U.S. are larger than those found in the south. They feed primarily on fish, but also eat small animals. They swoop down at 75-100 miles per hour to seize their prey with powerful and sharp talons. Bald Eagles like to live near large bodies of open water, where there are plenty of fish and tall trees for nesting and roosting.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bald Eagle was officially declared the national emblem of the United States in 1782. It was selected by the founding fathers because it is a species unique to North America, with a presence in every state except Hawaii. They range from Alaska to Baja, California, and from Maine to Florida. In winter, northern eagles migrate to the warmer south where it is easier to find food. This bird has been recorded flying at a speed of 44 miles per hour. In the early 1700s there were estimated to be as many as 500,000 Bald Eagles in the U.S., but by the 1960s they had dropped to an endangered level of less than 500 pairs. Humans caused this decline. Shooting eagles, use of pesticides on crops, destruction of their habitat, and contamination of waterways and other food sources all contributed to the deterioration of numbers. Thanks to strong environmental protection laws, the Bald Eagle has been brought back from the brink of extinction. Their numbers rose to over 10,000 nesting pairs in 2007, when they were delisted from threatened status.

For more detailed information visit www.eagles.org

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Which is the only state in the U.S. where the Bald Eagle is not found?

- a) Oregon
- b) Alaska
- c) Hawaii
- d) California

Answer is C

