



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

America's National Wildlife Refuge System

*Ten Facts About Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)*

1. Although bald eagles live throughout the continental United States, Alaska, with about 50,000 eagles, has the most. Ideal bald eagle habitat consists of mature shoreline forests with scattered openings and little human use, near water with abundant fish and waterfowl.
2. The phrase "eagle eye" describes the highly developed visual ability of bald eagles, which can spot a moving rabbit almost a mile away. An eagle, flying at 1,000 feet altitude, can spot prey across almost 3 square miles.
3. Before European settlers sailed to America's shores, there may have been 500,000 bald eagles on the continent. Their population fell to endangered levels of fewer than 420 pairs in the lower 48 states by the early 1960s. Today, there are more than 6,400 nesting pairs. Because bald eagle populations have revived, the US Fish and Wildlife Service upgraded the eagle's status from "endangered" to "threatened" with extinction in 1995.
4. Adult eagles generally weigh between seven and 14 pounds - with females somewhat larger than males. With wingspans of six to eight feet, they can lift as much as four pounds. The oldest eagle in the wild lived 23 years, according to researchers. They can live twice as long in captivity.
5. Bald eagles feed primarily on fish, waterfowl and seagulls and carrion (dead animals) and occasional other animals. Eagles' talons close instantly on their prey and can't be opened again until the eagle pushes down on a solid surface.
6. Bald eagles can fly about 65 miles per hour. They can soar to altitudes of 10,000 feet, staying aloft for hours using natural wind currents and thermal updrafts.
7. Bald eagles make their new nests an average of two feet deep and five feet across. Eventually, some nests can reach 10 feet wide and weigh as much as 4,000 pounds.
8. Although bald eagles may range over great distances, they usually return to nest within 100 miles of where they were raised.
9. Bald eagles mate for life, and will only choose another mate if its faithful companion dies. Courting often involves spectacular aerial displays of diving and eagles locking talons.
10. Females in northern states lay one to three eggs between January and March, with a peak in February. Incubation lasts about 35 days. Chicks generally are flying in about three months. Eagles do not develop their distinctive white head and tail until their fourth or fifth year.

