

BALD EAGLE
(*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

STATUS: Threatened (60 FR 35999, July 12, 1995) without critical habitat.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Large, bird of prey that is 0.9 m (3 ft) long and has a 1.8-2.1 m (6-7 ft) wingspan. Adults have a white head, neck, and tail. Body color is a dark brownish-black. Has a yellow hooked bill and yellow unfeathered legs and feet. Immature bald eagles are mostly dark without the characteristic white head and tail, and may be confused with golden eagles. Feeds primarily on fish, but waterfowl, small mammals, and carrion constitute a portion of the diet.

HABITAT: Usually found along sea coasts, lakes, and rivers. Nesting sites are usually isolated high in trees, on cliffs, or on pinnacles, with a commanding view of the area and in close proximity to water.

RANGE: Historic: Bald eagles ranged throughout the contiguous U.S., Canada, and northern Mexico, but the historic distribution in Arizona and New Mexico is unknown.

Current: Nesting populations are increasing throughout the U.S. The largest populations are found in Alaska and Canada, as well as significant populations in the Pacific Northwest, the Great Lakes States, and the Southeast Coast. A small resident population of approximately 40 pairs nests along the Salt, Verde, Gila, Bill Williams, Agua Fria, San Pedro, and San Francisco rivers and along Tonto and Canyon creeks. Bald eagles winter throughout the state of Arizona, with at least 200 to 300 found each year. The greatest numbers of wintering eagles are found along the Mogollon Rim east through the White Mountains. Found in all fifteen counties of Arizona.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Threatened (and previously endangered) due to reproductive failure caused by pesticide use, namely DDT; and unrestricted killing by humans. Current threats are habitat loss, human encroachment on nesting sites, entanglement in fishing line, reduction in native fish species, illegal shooting, and heavy metals.

NOTES: A Recovery Plan for the Southwest population was completed in September 1982 and is available online at: <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/Documents/RecoveryPlans/SWBaldEagle.pdf>

Reclassified from endangered to threatened in July 1995. In July 1999 (64 FR 26453, 07/06/1999) the Service proposed to remove the bald eagle from the list of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in the lower 48 states of the United States. The recovery is due in part to habitat protection and management actions. Removal of the bald eagle as a threatened species under the Act will not affect the protection provided under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and many other state laws.

New nest sites may be partially a result of increased search effort as well as actual population increase.

Listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State of Arizona.