

EagleFest

The Delaware Valley Eagle Alliance

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Newsletter

Winter 2006

Saving Habitat for our National Symbol

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The bald eagle has made remarkable strides towards recovery since being one of the first species designated for protection under the Endangered Species Act more than 30 years ago. This progress has not come easily, or overnight. Since the early 1970s, we've implemented important laws such as the Clean Water Act, which has curbed pollution, improved water quality, and enhanced the health of fisheries nationwide. We've also banned use of the pesticide DDT in the United States, implicated in eggshell thinning and nest failure of eagles and other birds. The result has been a healthier environment for bald eagles, fish, numerous other kinds of wildlife, and people as well.

Along with these measures have been concerted efforts by state and federal agencies, non-government organizations, and citizens to protect bald eagles, their nests, their habitats, and to educate the public about these magnificent birds' needs. Over the past three decades, all of these efforts have
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The Delaware Valley
Eagle Alliance
welcomes you to....



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EAGLEFEST
NARROWSBURG, NEW YORK
Saturday, January 14, 2006
9:30AM – 4:30PM

Live bird demonstrations, observation sites, guest lectures, films, poster auction, eagle art (snow or shine)

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gradually helped to promote their survival and reproductive success.

Bald eagle populations have rebounded in the Mid-Atlantic States along with other parts of the country. We've come a long ways from the early 1970s, when the combined number of active nests in the three-state region (New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey) could be counted on one hand. This past spring (2005), observers counted 92 active nests in New York state, 96 active nests in Pennsylvania, and 48 active nests in New Jersey (although nesting success ranged from 67% to 83% among states). The number of breeding pairs in these states has increased at an average annual rate of about 10% over the past several years.

While most of New Jersey's nests are found in the southern part of the state (80% are located in Cumberland and Salem counties), the Upper Delaware River region provides some of the most important, and productive nesting habitat in Pennsylvania or New York. The Delaware River and its tributaries provide an ample supply of fish for bald eagles and their young, and the relatively undisturbed riverside and upland areas, with mature trees, provide suitable nesting habitat. While important to bald eagles, this area is also one of the fastest-growing in terms of human population, with Pike County, PA, and Orange County, NY the fastest-growing counties in their respective states.

The significance of the unspoiled habitat of the Upper Delaware River region extends beyond what is needed for resident breeding bald eagles and their young, however. Of even greater importance is its use as crucial wintering habitat by a much larger number of bald eagles from a more extensive geographic area, as evidenced by tracking research done by Peter Nye of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Migration of eagles from our area can be followed at www.learner.org/jnorth.

The Upper Delaware region is one of the largest and most important inland bald eagle wintering habitats in the eastern United States. based upon consistency of annual use and



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numbers of eagles confirmed using the Delaware. This use has been documented by aerial surveys and winter counts done by the NYSDEC, the Eagle Institute, the National Park Service, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the National Audubon Society, and other monitoring organizations over the past 27 years.

One time counts along the upper 75 miles of the Delaware River have documented as many as 145 eagles, and it is estimated that at least 200 different eagles use the Delaware here for some period of time during the winter. Bald (and golden) eagles from as far north as the Canadian Maritime Provinces come here for the combination of ice-free open water for foraging, abundant prey (fish, waterfowl, carrion), adequate undisturbed upland areas for perching, and especially for all-important roosts with shelter from winter winds. This area provides a unique combination of resources, found in few other places in eastern North America, that enable eagles to find food and safe roosts in close proximity, and to survive harsh winters and enter the breeding season in good condition.

The bald eagle, our national symbol, has made dramatic progress towards recovery over the past three decades, and this is something to celebrate. In 1995, they were reclassified from endangered to threatened, and in 1999 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed them for delisting altogether. This action has not yet occurred due to concerns about habitat protection and maintaining gains we've achieved the species.

I believe that, with proper foresight and planning, we can provide for and sustain the recovery of our national symbol, ensuring that future generations can experience the inspirational sight of bald eagles in the wild.

EAGLE FACTS:

- **Height: 30-31", Wing Span: 6'-7'6", Weight: to 14 lbs, Life Span: 25 – 30 years.**
- **Mated bald eagles are monogamous.**
- **Female bald eagles are larger than the males.**
- **2 or 3 white eggs in a massive nest of sticks usually in a tall tree.**
- **Can fly 36 – 44 miles per hour.**
- **Juvenile bald eagles resemble Golden Eagles, require 4 – 5 years to reach full adulthood, have a longer tail and wider wings than adults.**
- **Snatch fish from the surface with their talons.**
- **Have special pads on the soles of their feet, especially designed to firmly grip a slippery wriggling fish.**
- **Each foot has four toes, three pointing to the front and one to the rear, ending with razor sharp black talons up to two inches long.**



Mid-Winter New York State Bald Eagle Survey

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Every year for the past 27 years New York's DEC participates in the national mid-winter bald eagle survey, coordinated nationally by the Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey. The survey, which occurs the first half of January, is conducted via several aerial surveys over major portions of the state.

In 2005, a record total of 441 bald eagles were tallied - 257 adults and 184 immatures. This, compared to 363 bald eagles - 241 adults and 122 immatures in 2004. The increase likely reflects the on-going increase in the resident population and their young. The most significant increase in 2005 appeared to be in the "immature" component, those eagles 4 years old or less.

DEC continues to pursue research and monitoring of several major populations of wintering eagles in New York, including capture, banding and satellite tracking. The focus for wintering eagle research has now shifted to the Upper Delaware River, where a multi-year study has been launched in partnership with the National Park Service. This study will also include breeding eagles in this area and their young, basically to define essential habitats used by eagles along the Upper Delaware. For more information go to <http://learner.org/jnorth> or <http://www.dec.state.ny.us>.

NYS continues to provide consistent over-wintering habitat for one of the largest bald eagle populations in the northeast US.

Bald eagles observed within major NYS wintering areas for the past four years include:

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Upper Delaware River	109	41	28	114
Mongaup River	42	109	86	75
Hudson River	22	44	16	21
St. Lawrence River	19	17	45	31
All other areas	117	103	181	200

Observations continue to confirm the importance of the

wintering areas, not only to resident New York State bald eagles, but to numerous eagles from eastern Canada (as confirmed by DEC's extensive migration tracking studies). These studies have not only documented the migratory timing and pathways of these eagles, but perhaps most importantly, they have demonstrated the long-term fidelity of these eagles to these particular wintering grounds.

These critical wintering habitats are highly specialized and few, requiring concerted attention and conservation by landowners and resource managers in order to ensure their availability into the future.

* Information & statistics provided by Peter Nye, NYS DEC

EAGLE EYES

Did you know that a bald eagle can spot a fish up to three miles away, or that it can spot another eagle in flight more than 4 miles away?

Eagles are gifted with superior eyesight, among the best in the world. The eyes of a bald eagle may be as much as eight times sharper than a human's. This gives them a most important advantage over their prey.

The eyes of a bald eagle consume most of the space their head and are almost as large as human eyes. Their eyes face forward, giving them binocular vision similar to humans. Binocular vision allows for precise depth of field. This is important for humans when manipulating small objects with our hands, or for eagles, that must snatch prey with their talons while diving from the sky. Bald eagles also have color vision, unlike many mammals.

The bald eagle's eyes are protected and cleaned by a secondary eyelid, called the nictitating membrane. In addition, two sets of eyebrows shield its eyes from intense sun glare. This makes it possible for the eagle to stare directly toward the sun in its mid-morning hunts without danger of damage.

The Delaware Valley Eagle Alliance welcomes you to the 5th annual EagleFest

According to festival organizer, **Yoke Bauer DiGiorgio**, **EagleFest 2006 will continue in its mission to combine a day of entertainment and education for young and old.**

Returning this year, is **Bill Streeter** Director of the Delaware Valley Raptor Center with two live birds of prey demonstrations.

Peter E. Nye, Endangered Species Unit Leader, Wildlife Diversity Group at NYS DEC will be presenting an update on the status of eagles in NYS and recent study that has been initiated along the Upper Delaware River.

Dr. Lawrence J. Niles, Chief of Endangered and Nongame Species Program Division of Fish, Game, and Wildlife, NJ DEP will be presenting an update on the status of eagles in New Jersey

Douglas Gross, Wildlife biologist and Endangered Bird Specialist at the Pennsylvania Game Commission, will be presenting an update on the status of eagles in PA.

Dr. Keith Bildstein, Director of Conservation Science, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary will be presenting "America's Bald Eagle: A Conservation History".

Eric Stiles, Vice President of Conservation and Stewardship of New Jersey Audubon will be discussing conservation issues in the region.

Lori McKean, Director of The Eagle Institute will be discussing conservation issues in the region.

Lauren Butcher, full-time educator, from the Raptor Trust in NJ will be presenting an owl program for children featuring live owls.

Teaching children about the environment, wildlife, and family values, **John and Teresa Crerand** are returning with all new stories about Christopher, a river otter and his discoveries about his world and other wildlife.

There will be activities and exhibits throughout town:

- Featured artist is Frank Holmes
- Eagle photography by John A DiGiorgio.
- Eagle art posters by local artists for auction.
- Ice sculpture demonstrations by Ice Works.
- Telescope demos by High Point Scientific.
- Exhibits by regional conservation groups
- Eagle viewing assisted by Eagle Institute Volunteers
and much more

THE DELAWARE VALLEY EAGLE ALLIANCE
is dedicated to increasing awareness,
understanding and promoting conservation of
our wildlife and natural environment.

For more information about the Delaware Valley Eagle Alliance:
E-mail: jyd630@aol.com or Visit our Website: www.naturesartllc.com

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