



## **BALD EAGLE CHICK DEVELOPMENT**

Eggs are laid as singles with a day or two between the laying of each. Incubation, on average, lasts 35 days and both male and female spend time incubating the eggs. Each will lose insulating feathers from their breasts forming a patch of skin (called "Brood Patch") they can bare to brood against the eggs.

Not all eggs are fertile. On average, 75% of the eggs hatch. Growth within fertile eggs is triggered by warmth that comes from the body of the incubating adult.

Adults begin to feel movement of the chicks within the eggs and hear them start to chirp several days before they hatch. It can take a chick several days to break its way free from the egg, chipping at the shell with its beak (aided by an "EGG TOOTH", a small pointed part of its beak which disappears quickly after hatching).

The first 2-weeks chicks are covered in white down and depend on the adults for warmth, called "brooding".

Chicks typically have a determined pecking order based on size. Since the first hatched will always be larger because of time advantage, it will typically dominate other chicks in the nest.

By 2-3 weeks, chicks are covered in gray down and are more able to regulate their temperature. When the chicks are young typically the male does most of the hunting. Chicks are not yet able to tear the prey and are fed regularly by both adults.

By 3-4 weeks, flight feathers are appearing. Chicks may eat as much as 2 lbs per meal. Growth is rapid.

By 5-6 weeks, chicks are developing coordination and are more active and playful. They may grab at adults to get food.

By 7 weeks, chicks are proficient at moving around the nest. The adults typically spend less in the nest and may perch on branches in the nest tree or neighboring trees.

By 8 weeks, chicks are nearly adult size. Coordination is improving and body posture is more erect. Chicks are able to tear prey and feed themselves.

By 9-10 weeks, chicks exercise flight muscles and learn to control lift in preparation for their first flights. This includes taking to the support branches of their nest tree.

Fledging typically occurs between 10-12 weeks. Chicks remain dependent on the adults for food for several weeks after fledging.

Now called juvenile bald eagles, they resemble golden eagles, have a longer tail and wider wings than adults and will require 4-5 years to reach full adulthood.