



# Bald eagle

## Facts

### What they are

Large sea eagles.

### Wingspan, weight, lifespan, number of offspring

Wingspan: 2.5m

Lifespan: 20yrs

Weight: 3-6kg

Offspring: 2 or 3 per year

### Where they live

They live in the United States, Canada, and northern Mexico.

### Food chain

The bald eagle is near the top of its food chain. The eagle eats fish by catching it directly from the sea, and sometimes it steals fish from other sea birds. Bald eagles also eat smaller birds, small mammals such as mice, snakes, turtles, and crabs, as well as dead animals of all sizes (carrion). Owls, raccoons, ravens, and squirrels will attack eagle eggs or chicks, but will not attack adult eagles.

## Threats

The bald eagle was made the national bird of the United States in 1782. At that time there were hundreds of thousands of bald eagles in North America. But after that, the birds were hunted for sport, and also because ranchers and farmers thought they were a threat to livestock. In Alaska, they were killed so that they would not eat the salmon. Alaskan bounty hunters killed more than 100,000 eagles between 1917-52.

In 1940, the U.S. government made it illegal to kill bald eagles. But now there was a new threat. The pesticide DDT, which was used to kill weeds, made the eagles' eggs very fragile so that they broke before the chicks could hatch. As a result of all of these things, by 1960, there were only around 900 bald eagles left. In 1972, DDT was banned, and in 1978, the bald eagle was listed as an endangered species. This allowed the bald eagle to recover.

By 1995, there were around 9,000 bald eagles in North America, and by 2007 there were once more tens of thousands of bald eagles. By this date there were enough bald eagles that they were no longer endangered. But the bald eagle is not safe yet. Building and construction can destroy their habitats, and logging and climate change reduces the number of trees where they can build their nests.