



How You Can Help

Federal grants fund much of the Bald Eagle surveys, but you can help as well. You can support Texas wildlife, like the Bald Eagle, by becoming a Wild Friend.

Wild Friends support the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund used to protect, restore, research, and manage nongame species and habitat.

As a Wild Friend, you will receive *Eye on Nature*, the newsletter of the Nongame and Urban Program. This will keep you informed about the nongame resources of our state. To become a Wild Friend and to receive our newsletter, please fill in the following information and send it, along with your donation, to the address below. Make checks payable to the Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund. We greatly appreciate your support.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

DONATION: \$ _____ to the:

NES Conservation Fund
 Nongame and Urban Program
 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
 4200 Smith School Road
 Austin, TX 78744

The Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus



Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Nongame and Urban Program works toward the protection and management of native Texas wildlife species classified as nongame, threatened or endangered. One of these species is the charismatic and beautiful Bald Eagle.



Status:

The Bald Eagle gained full protection under federal law in 1940 making it illegal to shoot or possess them without a special permit. On February 14, 1978, the Bald Eagle was listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. The Bald Eagle was later downlisted to threatened on August 11, 1995.

Life History:

Adult Bald Eagles have a white head and tail and a dark brown body. The sexes are alike in plumage. Immature and sub-adult Bald Eagles resemble Golden Eagles and have white axillary spots and diagonal white lines under the wings.

Bald Eagles nest in Texas from October to July and breed mainly in the eastern half of the state. They winter in the Panhandle as well as in Central and East Texas. Nests can measure up to six feet in diameter and weigh several hundred pounds.

Bald Eagles mate for life and use the same nest year after year, adding new material as needed. These unique raptors may live up to 30 years in the wild and have been known to live 36 years in captivity. Fish is their main food source, but they will also eat birds, small mammals, turtles, and carrion when these foods are available.

Interesting Fact:

In 1782, the Bald Eagle was chosen as the U.S. national bird by beating out the Wild Turkey by only one congressional vote!

Our Research

Texas Parks and Wildlife is conducting two ongoing surveys to determine and monitor the status of this bird in Texas; the Bald Eagle Nesting Survey and the Bald Eagle Mid-Winter Survey. The surveys are conducted annually to monitor breeding and wintering populations.

Bald Eagle Nesting Survey:

This survey is conducted from early December through March and was first started in Texas in the 1960s. At that time, less than 5 active nests were known. Efforts increased in the 1970s to find and document Bald Eagle nests. From 1975 to 1995 the number of known active nests increased from 7 to 40. This increase was in part due to a rise in Bald Eagle population, expanded agency effort, and an increase in nest reports due to an increase of public awareness. Data collected includes nest location, status, productivity, and hatching date of offspring. These data are also used to aid in the preparation of environmental impact assessments on development projects in nesting areas.

Mid-Winter Survey:

In mid-January, 22 standardized locations are monitored to estimate the non-nesting winter Bald Eagles found in Texas. Nineteen of the 22 sites are reservoirs in the central and eastern portions of the state. The sites are surveyed annually for a span of ten years in order to get a trend. Reports from 1994 indicated 360 Bald Eagles were sighted with 303 sighted in 1995. In 1996, the Bald Eagle count was 248. Lake Palestine and Lake Fork reported the highest numbers with 37 eagles each. Numbers can vary due to climatic conditions and food availability. During mild winters, the number of Bald Eagles migrating into Texas is low; therefore, the number of eagles counted often lowers during the years of milder winters.

Volunteer opportunities are available in some site areas. For more information on whether volunteers are needed in your area, please call Annice Storey at (903) 566-1626 during the fall of each year.
