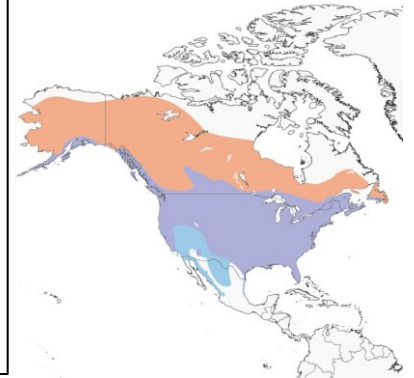


# Bald Eagle



Classification  
**Kingdom:** Animalia  
**Phylum:** Chordata  
**Class:** Aves  
**Order:** Falconiformes  
**Family:** Accipitridae  
**Genus:** *Haliaeetus*  
**Species:** *leucocephalus*



## Range, Habitat, Conservation Status

- **Range:** Found throughout North America in many different habitats throughout its range, which covers most of Alaska, Canada, and the contiguous United States all the way south to northern Mexico.
- **Habitat:** Prefer areas near large water bodies, including sea coasts, coastal estuaries and inland lakes and rivers.
- **Conservation Status:** Least Concern

## Physical Characteristics

- **Body Length:** 27.9 to 37.8 inches (71-96 cm)
- **Wingspan:** ~80 inches (204 cm)
- **Weight:** 6.6 to 13.9 pounds (3000-6300 g)
- **Lifespan:** Average of 15 to 20 years in the wild and 20 to 30 years in human care.
- **Identifying Traits:** Adults have white heads and tails with dark brown bodies and wings. Their legs and bills are bright yellow. See fun facts for juvenile traits.

## Behaviors

- **Feeding:** Opportunistic feeder that is both a predator and a scavenger (eats carrion). Hunts by watching from a high perch, then swooping down to catch prey in its talons. Eats mostly fish when available but will also eat other birds and mammals.
- **Breeding:** The timing of laying varies regionally. Eggs are incubated in Florida beginning in October until April, whereas in Yellowstone, eggs are incubated from March until April.

- **Nesting:** Build some of the largest nests of all bird species - typically 5 to 6 feet in diameter and 2 to 4 feet tall and ranging in shape from cylindrical to conical to flat, depending on the supporting tree.
- **Migration:** Partially migratory, which means that some individuals will move to areas outside their breeding range at certain times of the year.
- **Call:** Squeaky cackling and thin squeals.

## Resident Bird(s)

**Name:** Geronimo (Gerry)

- **Age:** Hatched in 2015
- **Sex:** Male
- **Background:** Came from another educational facility in the United States. Non-releasable due to tail paralysis.\*
- **Unique Individual Traits:** Like other Bald Eagles, Gerry and Cy compete for food and both think that their roommate has the tastier option.

**Name:** Cy

- **Age:** Hatched in 2014
- **Sex:** Male
- **Background:** Came from another educational facility in the United States. Non-releasable due to missing right eye.\*\*
- **Unique Individual Traits:** Like other Bald Eagles, Gerry and Cy compete for food and both think that their roommate has the tastier option.

## Fun Facts!

- Immature birds have mostly dark heads and tails; their brown wings and bodies are mottled with white in varying amounts. Young birds attain adult plumage, including the white head, around five years of age.
- The Bald Eagle is an Endangered Species Act success story. In the mid-1900s, the national symbol of the United States was in danger of extinction throughout most of its range. Bald Eagles were decimated by habitat destruction and degradation, as well as illegal shooting and the contamination of their food source by the insecticide dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, known as DDT. Habitat protection afforded by the Endangered Species Act, the federal government's banning of DDT, and conservation actions taken by the American public have helped Bald Eagles make a remarkable recovery.
- The largest Bald Eagle nest on record was found in Florida. It was used for 30 years and weighed 2 tons when it fell out of a tree.

## Importance

- Bald Eagles have been the national symbol of the United States since 1782 attracting bird watchers and nature enthusiasts.

- They are a top or apex predator, thus their population numbers impact those of all trophic levels of the food web.

## Sources

- [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bald\\_Eagle/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bald_Eagle/overview)
- <https://www.fws.gov/species/bald-eagle-haliaeetus-leucocephalus>
- <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/bald-eagle>
- <https://peregrinefund.org/explore-raptors-species/eagles/bald-eagle>
- [https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Haliaeetus\\_leucocephalus/](https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Haliaeetus_leucocephalus/)

\*This bird is unable to move his tail due to paralysis. Raptors use their tail during flight for steering and stopping. This type of permanent disability would inhibit his ability to navigate, hunt and survive in the wild.

\*\*This bird is missing his right eye. Eagles depend on their eyesight, so without full vision, he wouldn't be able to hunt and locate prey in the wild.