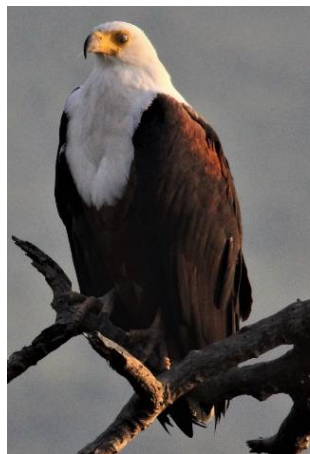


African Fish Eagle



Classification

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



Range, Habitat, Conservation Status

- **Range:** Found throughout sub-Saharan Africa from Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, and Eritrea in the north to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Indian Ocean in the east and to South Africa in the south.
- **Habitat:** Found primarily along bodies of water throughout sub-Saharan Africa; these include rivers, lakes, floodplains, coasts, estuaries, mangrove lagoons, and swamps.
- **Conservation Status:** Least Concern

Physical Characteristics

- **Body Length:** 25 to 30 inches (63-76 cm)
- **Wingspan:** 6 to 8 feet (1.8-2.4 m)
- **Weight:** 4 to 8 pounds (1.8-3.6 kg)
- **Lifespan:** Between 16 to 24 years in the wild.
- **Identifying Traits:** Adults are large, readily recognizable raptors, with pure white heads, necks, chests, and tails, dark chestnut brown bodies, and black primary and secondary feathers. Juveniles are mostly brown with white feathers scattered throughout.

Behaviors

- **Feeding:** Feeds extensively on fish, and in some areas, preys on flamingoes and other water birds. Also known to eat carrion.
- **Breeding:** Happens once a year. Along the equator, breeding can occur most months. In southern Africa, April through October is the typical breeding season, where in coastal eastern Africa it is June through December, and in western Africa it is October through April.

- **Nesting:** Build large nests out of sticks and branches, usually in a tree or on a cliff ledge. A pair uses the same nest year after year, each year adding new nesting material to the existing structure. After several years of these “add-ons,” the nests can become quite large. Some nests have measured up to 6 feet long and 4 feet deep. Lay two eggs on average.
- **Migration:** Adults are usually sedentary but may move about locally in response to changing environmental conditions such as drought, flooding events, or changes in food supply.
- **Call:** Tosses head backwards while making a loud penetrating “wheeee-ah-kleeuw-kleeuw-kluuu” call. One of the most distinctive bird sounds of Africa.

Fun Facts!

- Just like the Osprey, the African Fish Eagle has barbs known as spicules on its feet to help it hold on to slippery fish.
- The African Fish Eagle has the honor of being the national bird of three nations: Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Sudan.

Importance

- As a top predator, the African Fish Eagle is used as a reference to the health of aquatic ecosystems, since anything happening at lower trophic levels of the food web will affect the fish eagle through biomagnification. Biomagnification occurs when toxins within a food web are passed from one trophic level to the next, thus increasing the concentration of toxin in each level.

Sources

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- <https://ebird.org/species/affeag1>
- https://www.krugerpark.co.za/africa_fish_eagle.html
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