

Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia



Are you planning any development on your property? If your property includes, or is near to, the nest tree of a Bald Eagle, Osprey, or other large bird of prey, this fact sheet will provide you with important information about complying with the law, protecting these birds and enhancing enjoyment of your property.

Bald Eagles and Ospreys are found near lakes, rivers and shorelines throughout British Columbia.

Ospreys usually nest at or near the top of large, older deciduous or coniferous trees, or tall structures such as towers. They feed mainly on live fish, so they prefer to nest close to lakes, rivers, wetlands or shorelines.

Bald Eagles nest in the largest live trees in a forest canopy, often choosing trees with broken tops, large open crowns, or a major fork which will support their massive nests. The most suitable trees are large species—such as Douglas-fir—that are long-lived, deep-rooted, and resilient to prevailing winds. Bald Eagles nest close to their feeding areas, usually within a kilometre of shorelines, in order to minimize the energy used in bringing food back to the nest. They prefer fish, but will also eat rodents, birds, small mammals, crustaceans, or sometimes carrion (dead animals).

AT RISK

Although these and other large birds of prey are often seen soaring overhead, human activities can threaten their survival. The loss of available nesting and feeding habitats, as well as disturbance from human presence, reduces the birds' ability to thrive and successfully raise their young.

LEGALLY PROTECTED

It is an offense to possess, take, injure, molest, or destroy a bird or its eggs, or the nests of birds when occupied by a bird or egg (*B.C. Wildlife Act, Section 34*). Osprey and eagle nests are protected year-round, whether or not the nest is in use. Permission and a written permit from the Province are required to remove or modify a tree or snag containing an active nest of these species. Contact [FrontCounter BC](#) for information.



DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

More detailed guidelines for protecting the birds and their environment are provided in *Develop with Care 2014: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia* and *Guidelines for Raptor Conservation during Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia (2013)*.

- ☑ Identify the location of any nest trees or other important habitats such as feeding or perching areas before designing any development.
- ☑ Identify and mark out a buffer area around the nest tree(s) where there will be no form of disturbance or development (not even recreational trails). See *Develop with Care 2014 Table 4-1* for more information on buffer distances. Vegetated buffer areas help to preserve strong, healthy tree root systems; minimize exposure of the nest and supporting limbs to winds and storms; and shield nests and young birds from disturbance. Removal of nearby trees or changes in ground or surface water flows can affect the stability of the nest tree.



- ☑ Design and locate developments to avoid disturbing large birds of prey. Talk to your local government about ways to protect sensitive habitats, for example through clustering.
- ☑ Time construction carefully. Significant disturbances should be avoided when the birds are courting and nesting:
 - o Bald Eagles: January to September
 - o Ospreys: April to August
- ☑ Provide and protect important habitats. Protect feeding and perching areas and preserve large trees on your property. Avoid draining or filling wetlands or coastal marshes, and maintain shoreline habitats in as natural a condition as possible.
- ☑ Check with your local government to see if there is a Development Permit Area (DPA) or other bylaw that requires the protection of nest tree buffers in your area.

In rare circumstances, permission may be granted to remove a nest tree (for example, if it has become a hazard). Applications and information pertaining to *Wildlife Act* permits may be obtained from [FrontCounter BC](#).

For more information: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html>

Develop with Care 2014: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia
Guidelines for Raptor Conservation during Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia (2013)

Raptor Webcam Guidelines: An Addendum to Best Management Practices for Raptor Conservation during Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia.

FrontCounter BC (<http://www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca/>) or contact 1-877-855-3222

Photos: Header: Osprey nest: Dave Polster; Bald Eagle: Bob Friesen picturebc.ca; Perching tree: Judith Cullington.
Front page: Osprey nest and young: DND photograph by MCpl Karl McKay, CFB Esquimalt Imaging Services.
Back page: Young Bald Eagle and Adult Bald Eagle: Judith Cullington.