

Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Adult & Juvenile



Description

- Large eagle, with a wingspan of more than 2m, measures 76 cm tall and can weigh over 7 kg.
- Adults have a dark brown (almost black) body, with white contrasting feathers on their head and tail. Beak, eyes and legs are yellow.
- Juvenile Bald Eagles have a mottled brown colour all over. They achieve the distinct adult colouration at four or five years of age.

Similar Species

- Juvenile Bald Eagles are often confused with Turkey Vultures or Golden Eagles.

Biology

- Bald Eagles feed primarily on fish, but can also feed on aquatic birds, amphibian, reptiles and mammals (alive or found dead).
- The Bald Eagle nest is the largest of any bird in North America; on average the nests are 1.5-2m across and 1m tall.
- Females lay 1-3 eggs.
- Nesting activity can occur from mid Feb to July

Habitat

- Nests are almost always in dominant old-growth trees near salt water or fresh water shorelines. Nesting shorelines are often near estuaries and broad intertidal zones.
- In the interior, nesting habitats are along large low-gradient rivers and high floodplain/ wetland development, and at low elevation lakes.
- Common nest tree species include; Sitka spruce, Douglas fir, western red cedar, cottonwood and Aspen. These are usually dominant or co-dominant specimens in the nest vicinity and quite often knarled and very old.
- Nest found at lower elevations.

Occurrence: DSI, DCR, DSC

- Most of Canada's breeding population is found on BC coast.

Status

BC: Yellow-listed (Not at Risk);

Wildlife Act–Section 34(b) (cannot injure, molest or destroy a bird, eggs, or nest)

Canada: Not at Risk

Action Required

If nest is found:

- Retain the nest tree (protected under the *Wildlife Act*) with a 200m veg buffer.
- Notify BCTS, document, flag the location of the nest tree and occupation status
- Contact a qualified professional if you are uncertain about occupancy.
- From mid February to Aug. 31, stop work within 200m of an occupied nest until an assessment has been completed by a qualified professional biologist