

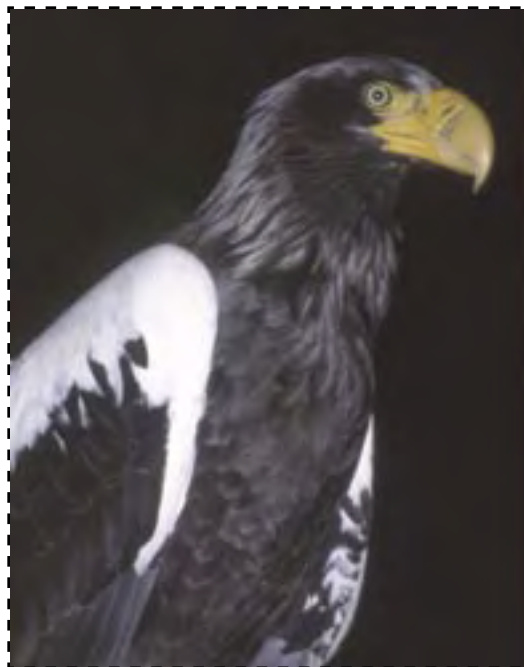
species spotlight: **Steller's Sea Eagle**

by Erin Estell, Manager of Animal Programs

The Steller's Sea Eagle is one of the largest species of eagle in the world, with a wingspan of up to eight feet in length. They spend most of their time in Russia and Japan along the coast of the Bering and Okhotsk Seas, but occasionally can be seen along the Alaskan coast.

The species is threatened by habitat destruction during construction of dams, coastal development for petrochemical companies, and logging. Use of DDT and PCBs and pollution of rivers are also having negative impacts on the eagles, and over-fishing in Russia and Japan is causing the eagles to move inland to scavenge on deer carcasses that often contain toxic lead shot. Conservation efforts are underway to protect the eagle's breeding grounds, which are also important spawning grounds for salmon.

This summer the National Aviary will become home to two Steller's Sea Eagles, one from the San Diego Zoo in California and the other from the Tallinn Zoo in Estonia. Both eagles are fairly young but are being paired up now with hopes that they will breed once they have reached maturity.



Steller's Sea Eagle

Haliaeetus pelagicus

Status:

Listed as Vulnerable by BirdLife International and in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Range:

China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Korea, Russian Federation, and Taiwan

Habitat:

Nests in tall, mature trees and on rocky cliff ledges along coasts and inland along lakes and rivers

Diet:

Mainly fish; also water birds, small to medium sized mammals, and carrion

Photo by Todd Katzner

Updates from the Avian Hospital

by Amy Killmeyer, Development and Communications Department

In April, one of the Aviary's Blue-naped Mousebirds underwent a risky surgery to remove a tumor-like growth on its lower back. Dr. Pilar Fish was not certain whether the dime-sized growth was a tumor, an abscess or a granuloma. However, she did know that the growth had to be removed for the bird's comfort and survival.

With blood loss a major concern, Dr. Fish used the radiosurgery machine to cauterize each blood vessel safely, without burning. One of the mousebird's sisters was present in case a blood transfusion was necessary to save the small patient.

More than two and a half hours and twelve stitches later, the mousebird was free of the mass and the complicated surgery was a success. Shortly after the procedure, Dr. Fish determined the growth was a feather granuloma, an accumulation of ingrown feathers and dead tissue comparable to human ingrown hairs. Tests further revealed that the granuloma was infected, a condition that could have been fatal if Dr. Fish had not removed the mass and treated the bird with proper antibiotics. She was christened Grace for enduring such a life-threatening ordeal.

Grace is now fully recovered. Just a tiny scar remains from the surgery, and she has since been reunited with her sisters. The staff plans to release all three mousebird sisters into the Tropical Forest soon.



The tiny bluebird in the leg cast who graced the cover of the last *Bird Calls* is doing well. The Aviary is pleased to report that his cast has been removed and now he can walk on his leg. The bluebird's leg, which sustained a significant amount of damage, will remain stiff, but in no way does his disability hinder his way of life. The bluebird is as energetic as ever and loves people. The Aviary's Animal Programs Department plans to incorporate him into education programs.

