

BALD EAGLES

- The bald eagle became the national emblem of the United States in 1782 – it beat out Thomas Jefferson’s suggestion of the dove and Ben Franklin’s suggestion of the wild turkey as our national bird.
- It is the only eagle unique to North America.
- Bald eagles do not grow their distinct white head feathers and tail feathers until they are 4 or 5 years old.
- They can weigh 7 to 15 pounds and have a wingspan of six to eight feet.

Native habitat and diet

- Bald eagles are found over most of North America from Alaska and Canada to Northern Mexico, along the coast and on major lakes and rivers.
- About half of the bald eagle population lives in Alaska and British Columbia due to the abundance of salmon, a major food source.
- The bald eagle’s diet in the wild consists mainly of fish, but also includes waterfowl, mammals and carrion.

Are bald eagles still endangered?

- Bald eagles were officially declared endangered in 1967.
- Their population decline was a result of many factors, but the agricultural use of the pesticide DDT was a major cause. DDT affected the eggs the eagles were laying. The eggshell wouldn’t form completely and the eggs would break during incubation. DDT was banned in the U.S. in the early 1970s.
- In 2007, the United States removed the threatened status of the bald eagle but the birds continue to be officially protected as the national emblem.

DID YOU KNOW? The National Aviary is home to a total of three bald eagles – they were all injured in the wild and are unable to fly. One of the eagles is on exhibit and the others are currently starring in the National Aviary’s free-flight show, **Wings!**



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