

# Bald Eagles and Forestry

Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and their habitat are protected in Oregon by the Oregon Forest Practices Act (FPA). In addition, they are an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Sensitive Vulnerable species and are an Oregon Conservation Strategy species. Bald eagles are also protected federally by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Bald eagles (BAEAs) have a wingspan of six to eight feet. Adult BAEAs are easily identified by their white head and tail, their yellow eyes, beak and legs, and their dark brown body. Immature BAEAs are darker and mottled; they do not obtain adult plumage until they are 4 to 5 years old.

BAEAs are most abundant in Oregon during the late winter and early spring, and are best detected by searching suitable habitat by eye, binoculars or spotting scope. BAEAs primarily eat fish caught by other birds of prey (e.g., osprey), but also hunt other birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. BAEAs eat what is available, and will capture their food live or as carrion (already dead).

BAEAs typically nest in live-top trees, often choosing a large dominant tree generally within two miles of water. Nest building and repair is done by both sexes, and nests are often five to eight feet in diameter and two to three feet deep. They exhibit strong fidelity to nests and mates. BAEAs will often build and maintain more than one nest. All nests, associated roosting and winter roost habitat require protection under the Oregon FPA even though the site may not be occupied that year. During nesting season, BAEAs are usually detected near shorelines of rivers, lakes and reservoirs.

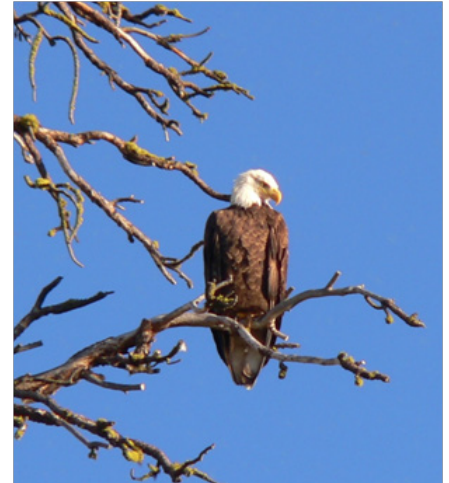


Photo by Christine Maynard.



Photo by Steven Wilder.

## WHAT ARE SOME THREATS TO THE BAEA?

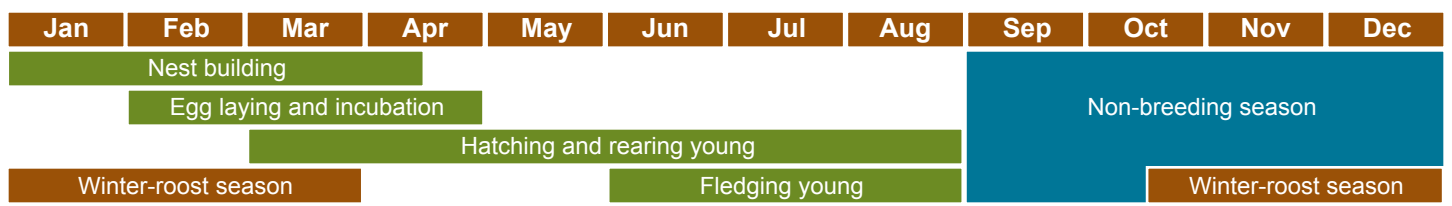
- Bald eagles are a success story. Their recovery has been so successful that BAEAs are commonly found throughout Oregon.
- Starvation is one of the main causes of death in juvenile bald eagles, due to competition for food.
- Toxicants

## WHAT IS MOST LIKELY TO DISTURB A NESTING BAEA?

- The BAEA is most sensitive to disturbance during the nest-building phase of the nesting chronology, and while hatching and rearing young.
- Chainsaw noise and other timber-felling equipment noise
- Road construction
- Repeated passes by low-flying aircraft such as helicopters
- Blasting

## WHEN DO BALD EAGLES NEST?

Critical nesting period:  
Jan 1 - Aug 31



## WHAT DOES THE FPA REQUIRE FOR NESTING SITES?

Protect the resource site, which includes the active nest tree and alternate nest sites, as well as an area no less than 330 feet surrounding the nest tree. The resource site includes all identified key components important to BAEAs: perching and fledging trees, replacement nest trees, and forested area around the nest tree.

## HOW DO I PROTECT THE NESTING SITE?

ODF will determine site-specific protections, if operations are found to be within 0.25 miles of a nest (or 0.5 miles of a nest if within sight of the nest). Generally, protections will include:

- Designing operations to protect the nest tree and surrounding buffer from damage and windthrow
- Working with ODF to determine trees that are left. The protected trees are there to provide a visual screen for the BAEA nest
- Prohibiting forest operations within 0.25 miles of a nest tree, or within 0.5 miles if conducted within line-of-sight of the nest tree, from **January 1 to August 31**
- Submitting plans to ODF before operating within or near a nest site. Plan must clearly describe how the nest site will be protected.

## WHAT DOES THE FPA REQUIRE FOR ROOSTING SITES?

Protect the roosting resource, which includes active roost trees, probable roost trees (as Identified by ODF) and other key components, including staging areas and a minimum 300-foot forested area around roost trees. An active roost site is one that has been used within the last five years.

## HOW DO I PROTECT THE ROOSTING SITE?

- Avoid destruction, abandonment or reduced use of the roosting site by bald eagles. Generally, protections include:
- Designing operations to protect the roost site and surrounding buffer from damage and windthrow
- Working with ODF to determine trees that are left. The protected trees are there to provide a visual screen for the BAEA roost
- Prohibiting forest operations within 0.25 miles of the roost site, or within 0.5 miles if conducted within line of sight from the roost site during the winter roost period. Winter roost periods extend from November 15 to March 15 for the majority of the state, and from October 31 to March 31 in the Klamath Basin
- Submitting plans to ODF before operating within or near a roosting site. The plan must clearly describe how the roosting site will be protected

### SOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

Oregon Forest Practices Act: <http://www.oregon.gov/odf/Pages/lawsrules.aspx>

[www.fws.gov/pacific/eagle/](http://www.fws.gov/pacific/eagle/)

National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines

Birds of Oregon A General Reference  
(Marshall et. al 2003/2006)



### ABOUT OFRI

The Oregon Forest Resources Institute was created by the Oregon Legislature in 1991 to advance public understanding of forests, forest products and forest management and to encourage sound forestry through landowner education.

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