



Friends of NCTC Program Activity
c. 2022 Friends of National Conservation Training Center

Eagles: The National Bird

Ages 5 and older

It's our National Bird!

Background (natural history)

There is just no mistaking that white head and tail! When you see an adult Bald Eagle flying or perched in a tree, it will probably take your breath away! The Bald Eagle was named the national symbol of the United States in 1782. Benjamin Franklin thought the Bald Eagle was of “bad moral character” because it was too lazy to fish for itself! (Eagles can be scavengers, eating animals that are already dead, but they do fish.) However, it is a myth that he wanted the Wild Turkey, rather than the Bald Eagle, to be the national bird.

What You Will Need for This Project

10 foot or larger measuring tape

Drawing paper and crayons or colored pencils

Access to an Eagle Cam such as the one at NCTC in Shepherdstown WV

<https://www.outdoorchannel.com/live/eaglecam/326707/0>

Paper or notebook to serve as a nature journal and pen or pencil

What to Do

Watch Some Eagles!

It doesn't matter if you live near Bald Eagles. There are many Eagle Nest Cams in the United States that allow you to watch them, like the one at the US Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown WV. At the NCTC nest, Bald Eagles will repair their nests in the winter, then often lay eggs in mid-February. (In other, warmer areas, they may begin late in the year.) As you watch the nest cam, keep track of what you see and record it in a journal.

Watch the Nest: Incubation of eggs generally takes about 35 days for Bald Eagles. Can you tell the female and the male apart? When do they lay their first egg? Do they lay only one or are there others? Calculate when eggs might hatch. What do the eagle parents do after the eggs are laid? Do they share nesting duties or is one of them responsible for sitting on the eggs? What happens if there is bad weather?

Watch the Baby Eaglets: Once the eggs hatch, it is usually 10-14 weeks before the baby eaglets fledge (leave the nest for the first time.) When the eggs hatch, what do the parents do? What kind of food do they bring to the babies? Do both parents provide food? What happens if there is bad weather? Are there dangers that the eaglets face in the nest?

Can You Build an Eagle's Nest?

Eagle nests are big! When a nesting pair is starting out, their first nest may be 5-9 feet in diameter and 3-5 feet deep. Eagles add to their nests from year to year, so older nests may be 8 feet deep! They are built of large sticks and can weigh 1000-2000 pounds! To find out how big they are, use a measuring tape to measure 5 feet. Why do you think their nests are so big?

How Far Can an Eagle Reach?

Eagles are big birds, but just how big are they? Birds are generally measured by their wingspan, the length from the tip of one wing to the other when the wings are stretched out. On average, female Bald Eagles have a wingspan of 7.2 feet (86.4 inches) and male Bald Eagles have a wingspan of 6.4 feet (76.8 inches). To find out

how “your wingspan” compares, you will need a ruler or measuring tape. Measure out 7.2 feet and mark each end on the floor or the ground. (Masking tape or blue painter’s tape works well for this.) Then, lie down so that your shoulders are in between the markings. Stretch out your arms and see if your arms are as long as an eagles. Have your family and friends try it, too.

What Do Eagles Eat?

Bald Eagles are predators, so they hunt and eat other animals. What kind of animals do you think are their prey? Check off your guesses; then challenge your family and friends to add their opinions. You will find the answers at the end of this program plan.

What Do Eagles Eat?	Waterfowl	Fish	Small Mammals	Small Pets	Birds	Dead Animals	Birdseed
My Guess							

What Do Bald Eagles Look Like?

When you see large birds flying overhead, you can tell the species by studying their silhouette and noticing the shape of their wings and tail. The graphic at the end of this program plan shows the difference between vultures, eagles, hawks, ospreys, and falcons.

Draw a Picture of one! You can find many images of Bald Eagles online. Use your artistic skills and draw your own eagle portrait. You can even challenge your schoolmates to an art contest! The chances are pretty good that your classroom teacher will even join in the challenge and post your artwork in the classroom.

Benjamin Franklin and Eagles

One of America’s Founding Fathers was Benjamin Franklin. Some people believe that he didn’t want the Bald Eagle to be our national bird, but wanted another bird. That’s actually not true, but what bird do you think he compared to the Bald Eagle? Make your guess, then find out the answer here: <https://www.fi.edu/benjamin-franklin/franklin-national-bird> (You can even take a poll among your family and friends before you look up the information. Just ask them what bird they think it was and keep track of their answers.)

**Helpful Hints for Adults
(books to read, other websites, links)**

*Eagle Nest Cam at NCTC in Shepherdstown WV

<https://www.outdoorchannel.com/live/eaglecam/326707/0>

*Several Eagle Nest Cams including Dollywood (TN), Great Smoky Mountains, National Arboretum (DC), and Florida can be found at these sites

<https://www.eagles.org/what-we-do/educate/live-hd-nest-cams/>

<https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Portals/48/docs/Recreation/ODM/pdf/Bald%20Eagle%20Activity%20Guide.pdf>

*For Benjamin Franklin’s actual quotes about the Bald Eagle and the Wild Turkey,

<https://www.fi.edu/benjamin-franklin/franklin-national-bird>

*For information about eagle wingpans <https://avianreport.com/bald-eagle-wingspan-versus-birds-prey/>

*For information about how bald eagles were impacted by pesticides in the 20th century and their recovery

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/state/bald_eagles

*There’s More Than One Kind of Eagle! <https://www.animalspot.net/eagle>

BALD EAGLE FACTS

The bald eagle is the symbol of the United States.

Female bald eagles are bigger than males.



Bald eagles are no longer endangered.



The bald eagle's population is growing.



The biggest bald eagle nest weighs 2,000 kilograms.



Bald eagles' tongue is somewhat similar to humans' tongue



Bald eagles are the most pictured birds in the United States.



Bald eagles normally keep their mouth shut.



The bald eagles are sea eagles, under the Haliaeetus species.



The tongues and beaks are full of 'mechanoreceptors'.



Bald eagle's beak is constantly growing.



It takes 1 to 3 months to build a nest.



They are not born with a white head.

An aging bald eagle faces physical challenges.



Bald eagles can soar on the rising pressure of the air.



A bald eagle's sound is not as impressive as any other prey birds.



The beak of the bald eagle is larger than the golden eagle.



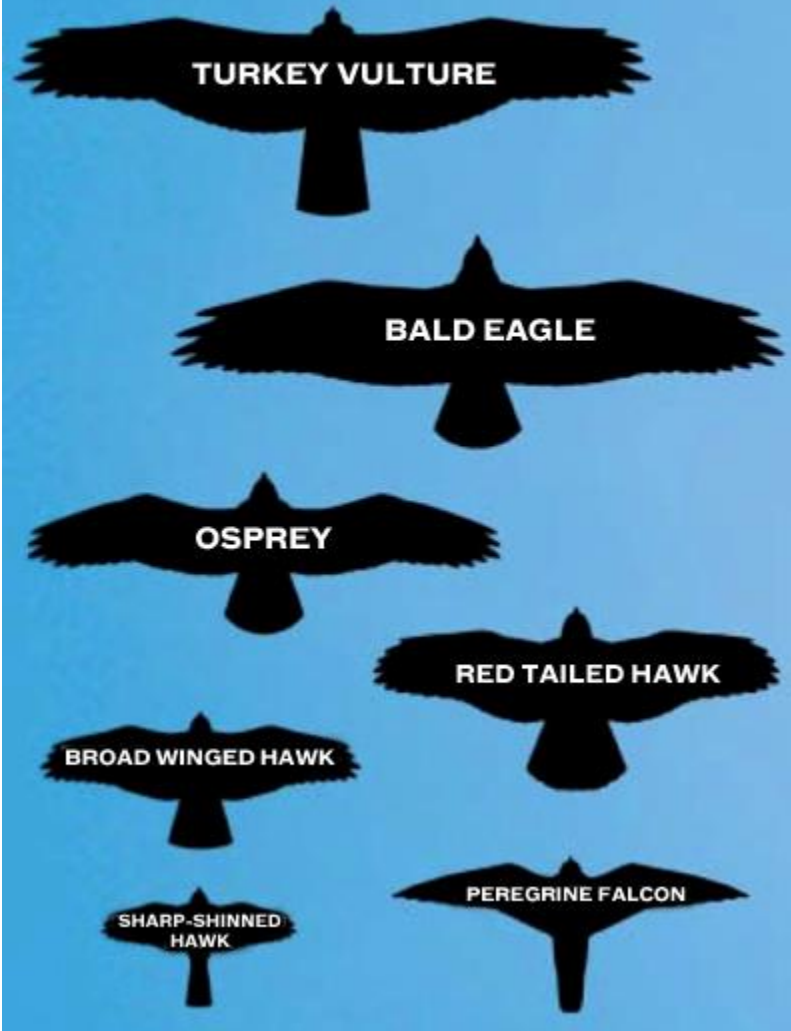
Every year, their nests can get bigger and bigger.



Bald eagles do have predators.

They may treat their nest as a "permanent home."

The key to identifying raptors is learning their relative sizes and the basic shape of wings, tail and body.



<https://westcountyhawkwatch.blogspot.com/2017/05/birds-of-prey-silhouettes-raptor-forms.html>

(Answer to What Do Eagles Eat)

What Do Eagles Eat?	Waterfowl	Fish	Small Mammals	Small Pets	Birds	Dead Animals	Birdseed
	X	X	X	X	X	X	