

BALD EAGLE

Lifespan: 20 to 30 years in the wild (up to 50 years in captivity)

Weight: 3 to 6.3 kilograms (females are up to twenty-five percent larger and heavier than males)

Body Measures: Head-to-body length 70 to 102 centimeters, wingspan 1.8 to 2.3 meters

TAXONOMY & ANATOMY

Belonging to the family Accipitridae, this majestic bird of prey is famous for its snowy-white head and tail, which contrast sharply with a dark chocolate-brown body and wings. It features a massive, hooked yellow beak designed for tearing flesh, paired with piercing yellow eyes that grant exceptional visual acuity. Its powerful, yellow legs terminate in large, specialized feet equipped with long, curved talons and tiny spicules that securely grasp slippery aquatic prey.

HABITAT

This formidable raptor is native entirely to North America, establishing its home ranges near substantial bodies of open water such as large lakes, rivers, marshes, reservoirs, and coastal estuaries. It strictly requires areas with an abundant supply of fish and mature, old-growth stands of coniferous or deciduous trees for nesting and roosting. While highly sensitive to heavy human disturbance during nesting, it occasionally adapts to managed reservoirs or coastlines with light boating activity.

DIET

Operating as an opportunistic carnivore, its primary sustenance consists of fish, which make up the vast majority of its diet depending on local availability. It regularly targets salmon, trout, catfish, and herring by sweeping low over the water surface to snatch them with its talons. When fish are scarce, it supplements its diet with waterfowl, gulls, small mammals like jackrabbits, and a significant amount of winter carrion.



INTRODUCTION

Sailing effortlessly across North American skies with an imposing, flat-winged silhouette, the legendary bald eagle stands as an apex avian predator and a timeless symbol of wild freedom, commanding open waters and ancient forest canopies with its fiercely striking white-crested profile and unmatched aerial dominance.





ETHOLOGY AND TEMPERAMENT

This powerful apex predator exhibits a fascinating mix of solitary hunting behavior and complex, highly organized social interactions around communal winter roosting sites. Possessing immense aerial agility, it frequently engages in kleptoparasitism, aggressively chasing down smaller raptors like ospreys to force them to drop their hard-earned catch mid-air. When defending territory or courtships, they communicate through a surprisingly thin, weak series of high-pitched chirps and whistles that belie their fierce appearance. Their daily rhythm is dictated by keen visual searching from high perches, combined with spectacular territorial flights where soaring pairs lock talons and free-fall through the sky in a dramatic display of dominance and coordination before separating just above the forest floor.

BREEDING SEASON

These raptors form deeply loyal, lifelong monogamous pair bonds, initiating their elaborate courtship rituals in early winter through breathtaking aerial acrobatics and synchronized loops. Together, the pair constructs an enormous stick nest called an eyrie, typically positioned in the crown of a towering tree, which they reuse and expand year after year until it ranks among the largest animal nests on earth. The female deposits one to three eggs, and both parents share incubation duties for roughly thirty-five days, taking turns protecting the nest from predators. Once hatched, the helpless, downy chicks receive constant parental care and a steady diet of shredded fish, remaining in the nest for up to twelve weeks before undertaking their historic first flight and practicing independent survival skills.

