



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Tourism and Business Development College of Business,
Oregon State University Extension - Oregon Sea Grant at
<http://tourism.oregonstate.edu/>

Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional Program
<https://www.GORPguide.org>

For more information about the GORP training program see:
<https://www.gorpguide.org/become-a-gorp-certified-guide>

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/bald-eagle-haliaeetus-leucocephalus/

By colliex2

September 8, 2020

There is a nest nearby. I can't see it, but I know it is tucked high in the tall Douglas-fir overlooking the river.

Most Bald Eagle nests are within one-half mile of a body of water. After all fish is one of their favorite foods. The water, in this case, is a coastal shoreline and the Coquille River. Bald Eagles will also nest near bays, lakes, farm ponds, especially if they can find large trees, an unobstructed view of the water, and few humans.



Photo from Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Their shadows smoothly slide across the grass. *Today they hunt.*

Bald Eagles will hunt over large areas soaring up to 10,000 feet. In addition to fish, they will also take other animals such as birds, turtles, and mammals (like rabbits and rodents). They are not particularly fond of mammals, but will take them or mammal carrions.

Carrion, particularly in the winter, is frequently scavenged. They are considered to be an opportunistic predator meaning that they hunt when necessary and scavenge carrion when possible.

Every once in a while, they fly back to the nest clutching a large and noticeably heavy fish. Makes a weird shadow. Scares the little birds.

These large raptors are scary. They can sport a wingspan of up to 8 feet! Their body is just a few inches short of a yard. Adult birds can weigh upwards of 14 lbs. As with many birds, the females are larger than the males.

Bald Eagles will hunt other birds (such as geese and gulls). They are known to harass other eagles and Ospreys in an attempt to steal food from them. They are also known to occasionally steal food from other mammals and occasionally humans.

Big birds need big nests.

Bald Eagles build some of the largest nests of any bird. The size will depend on the supporting tree but are often 5-6 feet in diameter and 2-4 feet tall. The nest can weigh upwards of a ton! The largest recorded Bald Eagle nest was found in St. Petersburg, Florida. It measured nearly 9 1/2 feet in diameter and just over 20 feet tall.

Building a nest is serious business and can take up to three months to build. These nests may be used over many years with additional materials being added each year. Sometimes ground nests, on cliff sides may be built.

One glance and you know what the little birds see.

Feathers of the adult Bald Eagle are quite distinctive with the white head and tail, brown body, with yellow beak, eyes, and feet. The distinctive color appears when the bird reaches four to five years of age. Both sexes have similar plumages.

Bald Eagles live a long time.

The oldest recorded wild bird, killed by a car in 2015, was at least 38 years old. Birds in captivity are known to live even longer.

Want to know more?

The Bald Eagle is one of the most studied North American birds and is the only sea-eagle found throughout North America. To learn more, visit the following references:

- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, My ODFW “Raptors”
(<https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing/species/raptors>)
- All About Birds, The Cornell Lab (https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bald_Eagle/...)
- Oregon Wild (<https://oregonwild.org/wildlife/bald-eagle>)
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service “Bald Eagle”
(<https://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/articles.cfm?id=149489418>)