

SAFE AND RESPONSIBLE EAGLE WATCHING

- ◆ Eagles are sensitive to human disturbance. Disturbing a pair of nesting birds can cause adults to abandon their eggs or young in the nest, so the pair doesn't reproduce until the following year. Winter eagle viewing has less impact on the birds, especially if done in a safe and responsible way.
- ◆ Don't disturb or harass wintering eagles, since they are already stressed by the cold and scarcity of food. Scaring eagles away from food may deprive them of the energy they need to maintain their body temperature through a cold, winter night. Unhealthy eagles generally don't successfully raise young the next spring.
- ◆ Stay at least 300 yards from perched eagles or even farther during severe weather.
- ◆ Stay in your vehicle when eagle watching, or use another obstruction, such as a blind or tree.
- ◆ Bald eagles feed mainly in the morning, so plan viewing trips for late morning or afternoon.
- ◆ December through February is the best time to visit bald eagle winter feeding areas. Bald eagles return to their nesting areas in late February or early March.
- ◆ Wintering bald eagles usually stay near open water, where water flowing through dams or rivers keeps the water from freezing. Bald eagles concentrate in these areas to hunt for fish and injured waterfowl.
- ◆ When viewing wintering bald eagles, watch for other interesting birds. The open water attracts many species of waterfowl. You may see other raptors, such as rough-legged and red-tailed hawks, in the open countryside.

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR SOUTH DAKOTA'S EAGLES?

- ◆ Join a conservation organization concerned with eagles and other vulnerable species.
- ◆ Be aware of legislation affecting wildlife conservation, and contact your representatives at all government levels.
- ◆ Learn about wildlife species and what they need, and inform others to enlist their help, particularly for endangered species.
- ◆ Volunteer to help groups trying to restore cottonwood forests for future bald eagle habitat.
- ◆ If you know the location of a bald eagle nest or major roost sites, notify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the SD Department of Game, Fish and Parks. You can report a nest or roost site by using the form at this website:
<http://www.sdgfp.info/Wildlife/Diversity/ReportTES.htm>
- ◆ If you find a dead or wounded eagle, notify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at (605) 224-1001 or call your local SDGFP Wildlife Conservation Officer. If wounded birds are treated promptly and properly at a wildlife rehabilitation center, many of them can be returned to the wild.
- ◆ Don't disturb bald or golden eagles during the nesting or wintering seasons. Always observe these birds from a distance.
- ◆ Report wildlife violations by calling the TIPS Hotline at 1-888-OVERBAG (1-888-683-7224).
- ◆ For more information, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at (605) 224-8693, SD Department of Game, Fish and Parks at (605) 773-4229, or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at (605) 667-7873.

EYEING EAGLES IN SOUTH DAKOTA



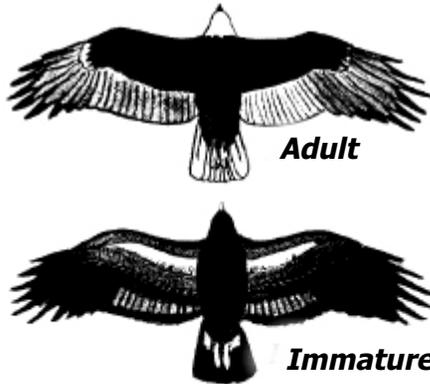
You can see both of North America's eagles in South Dakota almost anytime of the year. This brochure tells where, when and how to view bald and golden eagles and what you can do to help them survive.

Produced by Bald Eagle Awareness Days Committee, Pierre, South Dakota, in cooperation with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

EAGLE VIEWING - WHAT TO LOOK FOR



BALD EAGLE



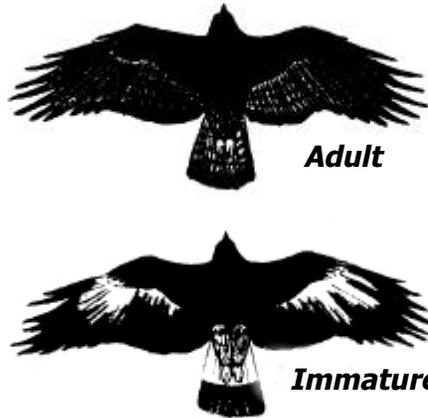
Adult

Immature

- ◆ Adult has dark body with white head and tail.
- ◆ Immatures are dark bodied with irregular mottling in wings and tail.
- ◆ Legs feathered to mid-leg only.
- ◆ Weight -- 6-14 pounds
- ◆ Wingspread -- 6-8 feet
- ◆ Female is 1/3 larger than male.



GOLDEN EAGLE

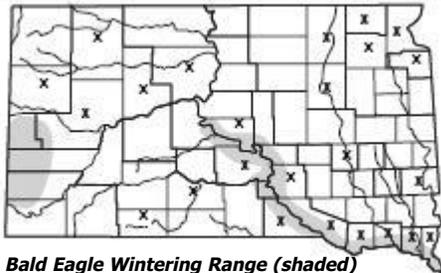


Adult

Immature

- ◆ Adult is dark brown with a golden nape of neck.
- ◆ Immatures are dark bodied with white in wing patch and at base of tail.
- ◆ Legs completely feathered.
- ◆ Weight -- 7-13 pounds
- ◆ Wingspread -- 5-7 feet
- ◆ Female is 1/3 larger than male.

WHERE TO SEE EAGLES IN SOUTH DAKOTA



Bald Eagle Wintering Range (shaded)

Bald eagle nests have been documented in the counties indicated. Wintering birds concentrate below Missouri River dams, in the flowing stretches of the Missouri River and in parts of the Black Hills.



Golden Eagle Breeding Range

Golden eagles nest mainly west of the Missouri River in South Dakota. Many are year-round residents of West River. Wintering and migrant birds may visit other parts of the state. Shaded counties have documented golden eagle nesting.



Special Places to View Bald Eagles:

Central South Dakota

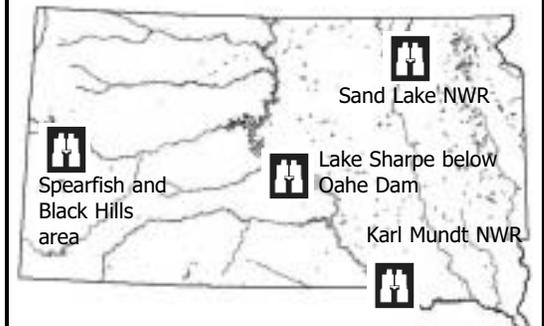
- * Pierre and Fort Pierre, particularly on and near the Missouri River.
- * Lake Sharpe below Oahe Dam in Stanley County, particularly SDGFP Campground #3, which is open to foot traffic only during the winter.

Eastern South Dakota

- * Karl Mundt National Wildlife Refuge in Gregory County.
- * Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge (particularly migrating bald eagles).
- * Anywhere East River during spring and fall migration, especially in cottonwood forests of the James and Big Sioux rivers.

Western South Dakota

- * SDGFP Farm near Spearfish (especially wintering birds).
- * Other sites in the Black Hills where they find prey during the winter.



BALD EAGLE BIOLOGY

Scientific Name: *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*; means white-headed sea eagle.

Life Span: May live up to 45 years, but many do not survive their first year.

Measurements: The bald eagle weighs 6-14 pounds and has a wingspread of 80 inches (6 1/2 feet). Females are 34-43 inches long, compared to males, which are 30-35 inches in length.



Range: Because of extensive recovery activities, including banning of certain pesticides in the U.S., the bald eagle has returned to much of its historical range in North America. Dozens of pairs now nest in South Dakota, and the population is expected to continue to expand into suitable habitat. Bald eagles move south for the winter to find open water, abundant food and protective cover for night roosting. South Dakota's wintering bald eagles congregate mostly on the open water below Missouri River dams. Here they find fish and waterfowl to eat and forest cover for protection against winter winds and low temperatures.

Coloration: Adult has a rich chocolate brown body with a white head and tail. Birds are four to six years old before they have this adult plumage. The beak, feet and eyes are yellow. Immature bald eagles have a rich chocolate brown body, head and tail. Undersides of the wings are spotted with white. Feet are yellow; beak and eyes are brown.

Diet: Fish make up 60-90% of their diet. Bald eagles will eat live or dead fish. They also eat waterfowl and mammals. Their habit of eating carrion (remains of dead animals) makes them vulnerable to poisoning from illegal lacing of animal carcasses for predator control.

Nest: The nest consists of a large mass of branches, usually next to the trunk of a tree and typically near water. A nest located on a cliff or mountaintop may be called an eyrie or aerie. Pairs often reuse nests year after year. Nests may reach 12 feet in height, measure more than 8 feet across and weigh several hundred pounds. Clutch size is one to three eggs, which both parents incubate for about five weeks.



Pair Bond: Adults usually mate for life. Impressive courtship displays help bond the pair. The pair may lock talons in mid-air and somersault downward. Both parents incubate eggs and care for nestlings. The pair may also hunt together to tire their prey or to pirate fish from osprey. Bald eagles also harass vultures to force them to disgorge food.

Protection Status: The bald eagle is protected under several state and federal laws, including the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The bald eagle is a state threatened species, giving it state protection as well. Because of population recovery, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delisted the bald eagle from the protection of the Endangered Species Act.

GOLDEN EAGLE BIOLOGY

Scientific Name: *Aquila chrysaetos*; named for the Greek words for golden eagle.

Life Span: Based on banding records, most birds live less than two years, although some wild birds have lived to be 11 years old. One captive bird lived to age 48.

Measurements: Males range from 6.5-9.5 pounds, females from 8-13 pounds. The golden eagle is 30-40 inches in length with a wingspread of about 79 inches (6 1/2 feet). Females are generally larger, although there is some size overlap.

Range: The golden eagle ranges throughout most of North America and in portions of Eurasia and northern Africa. This species breeds in the western United States and parts of the southwestern Canadian provinces and northern Mexico. Any of the lower 48 states may have migrant or wintering birds. In South Dakota, golden eagles nest mainly west of the Missouri River, but may winter in other parts of the state.

Coloration: The golden eagle is named for the golden brown feathers of its head and nape. Its eyes and beak are dark colored. The body is mostly dark brown, and feathers completely cover its legs. Juvenile golden eagles have white patches in the wings and a white tail with a black band on the outer edge.

Diet: Rodents, such as ground squirrels and marmots, are important golden eagle foods, as are lagomorphs, such as cottontails and jackrabbits. Golden eagles sometimes feed on deer and pronghorn fawns and domestic livestock. Golden eagles commonly feed on carrion, or dead animals. Since these birds are large and visible, many people



assume they have killed what they are eating, which is commonly untrue.

Nest: The pair nests on ledges of rocky cliffs or in large trees. The nest may be eight feet in diameter and be used for many years. Golden eagles usually build their nests of sticks and line them with a softer material, such as roots or moss. They incubate



their clutch of one to three dull white eggs for 43-45 days. The female may do most of the incubating, although the male brings food to the nest for the female to feed the young. Golden eagles commonly alternate between one or more nest sites from year to year.

Pair Bond: Golden eagles are believed to mate for life. However, a lost mate is quickly replaced by another. Displays include a sky-dance and tumbling through the air. A pair may use other displays, such as talon grasping and cartwheeling, when defending its territory. Golden eagles may be quite protective of their young. Adults may feed young for several months after young birds can fly. Some family groups may migrate together.

Protection Status: The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects the golden eagle, along with other migratory birds. This species enjoys added protection with the bald eagle under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. This act protects eagles from harm and disturbance and prohibits taking of eagles, their eggs or nests without a special permit. Special taking permits are sometimes given for animal damage control, scientific research, religious uses and falconry.