

Bald Eagles in the Yukon

Wildlife in our backyard



The Bald Eagle at a glance

Both male and female adult Bald Eagles have a dark brown body and wings with a white head, neck and tail. They have a yellow bill that is heavy and hooked, and long, yellow sharp claws for capturing and eating prey. An immature Bald Eagle is mostly brown with white streaks on the wings, body, and tail with a dark brown beak.

An adult bald eagle has more than 7,000 feathers

The eye of an adult Bald Eagle is roughly the same size as an adult human, but their eyesight is about 4 times better.

An eagle's beak, talons and feathers are all made of keratin, a type of structural protein. Human fingernails and hair are also made of keratin.



Like other birds, the bones of a Bald Eagle are hollow, making them light

Bald Eagles eat mostly fish, but other birds, and animals are also eaten. Bald Eagles will hunt from flight or from tall perches. They have powerful talons which they use to catch prey, but often prefer to scavenge, or steal.

28

A bald eagle will survive, on average, 28 years in the wild. They can survive more than 40 years in captivity

The older the eagle, the longer it will live. As eagles age, their survival rate increases.

4,000

Bald Eagles tend to fly by soaring and gliding on their broad, powerful wings. They can fly to altitudes of over 4,000 meters above ground level and under the right conditions can reach speeds of 100 km/hr

About Bald Eagles

There are about 60 different species of eagles in the world, but only two, the Bald Eagle and the Golden Eagle live in Canada.

Bald Eagles are only found in North America including Canada, the United States and northern Mexico. They are most common in Alaska and British Columbia along coastal areas.

Bald Eagle populations in North America have experienced large changes in size over the decades. Early explorers reported abundant Bald Eagles; however, by the 1900s, the species was rare throughout much of the continental United States, due largely to human persecution and the use of pesticides like DDT. As a result,



Bald Eagle



Golden Eagle

the species was listed as endangered. Following this, and heavy restrictions on the use of DDT in 1972, the population began to recover. In 2007, Bald Eagles were removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in the United States.

The English name 'Bald Eagle' is believed to have come from the old English word 'bald' meaning white. The Latin name for the Bald Eagle is *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*. *Haliaeetus* means 'sea eagle' and *leucocephalus* means 'white head'.

There are several terms which refer to a Bald Eagle at various stages of development:

- o **Eaglet:** is an eagle chick, usually refers to young still in the nest.
- o **Nestling:** may also be used to refer to a young bird which is confined to the nest.
- o **Fledging:** refers to a young bird making its first flight from the nest. A “fledgling” is a bird which has completed its first flight, but is still dependent on its parents for food and care.
- o **Immature Eagle:** is an individual that has reached its adult size, but has not yet developed its distinctive adult plumage.
- o **Adult:** An eagle is considered an adult after it has attained its adult plumage. Bald Eagles do not gain their adult plumage, and are generally not capable of breeding, until they are in their fifth year of life.

Bald Eagles in the Yukon

Bald Eagles are found at lower elevations throughout Yukon, but are most common in the south. Within the Yukon, Bald Eagles are generally present during the spring, summer and fall seasons with the majority being migratory. Spring migrants typically arrive between late March and early May depending on the location. Most birds will leave between late August and mid-November. Most Bald Eagles are found in lowland, forested habitats along rivers, lakes, or wetlands where there are abundant fish or waterfowl to feed on. Large numbers can also be seen at landfills and along roadsides where they scavenge food from garbage dumps or road kill.

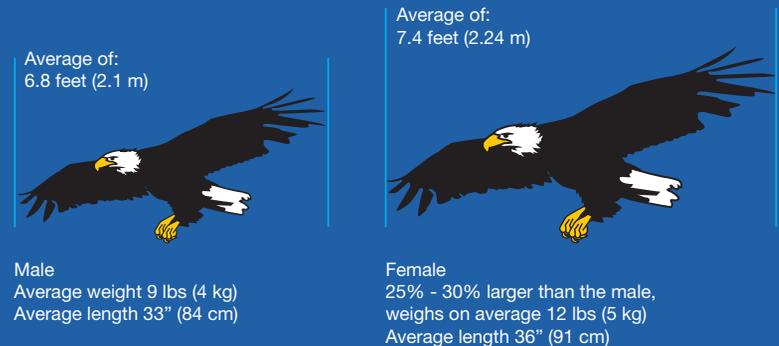
Eagle Size Across North America



The colder the climate, the larger the bird.

Bald Eagles in Florida weigh, on average, 5 lbs (2 kg). In South Carolina, they are a little larger averaging 7 lbs (3 kg) in weight. The largest, and heaviest, eagles are in the North known as the Alaskan Bald Eagle, where females can get up to 17 lbs (7.5 kgs).

Northern Bald Eagles



Eagle's nests are large and bulky and typically found in live or dead trees. Spruce and deciduous trees are the most common species used by nesting Bald Eagles in the Yukon. The nest tree is generally one of the largest trees available and is often taller than the surrounding trees. Nests are usually located near water such as large and medium sized lakes and rivers, or wetlands.

In the southern Yukon, breeding pairs of Bald Eagles have been observed building nests or repairing old nests from late March to the beginning of May. Young eagles will often use the nest as a feeding platform for several weeks after fledging as they continue to gain flight and hunting skills. In the southern Yukon, young birds have been observed from mid-July to mid-August, and large juveniles have been seen at nests as late as September. From mid-summer through fall, large numbers of eagles can be found concentrating around sources of food such as salmon runs or the Whitehorse landfill.

Most Yukon Bald Eagles likely spend the winter along the coast of Alaska or coastal areas in British Columbia.

Bald Eagle Reproduction and Nesting

Bald Eagles participate in elaborate courtship rituals including calls and aerobatics. Pairs can be seen locking talons and cartwheeling towards the ground together, diving towards the ground from high altitudes with wings folded, or chasing one another.

The breeding pair returns to the nest site in the spring, generally in late March or April, and begins repairing the nest or building a new one. Often a pair will reuse the same nest year after year.

There are no concrete population estimates for Bald Eagles in the Yukon; however, the population is believed to be increasing.

1,250

Based on surveys conducted between 1974 - 1989, estimated a total Yukon population of 1,250 - 1,900 Bald Eagles at fall migration

2,000

Today, there are more than 2,000 Bald Eagles found within the Yukon during the breeding season.

100,000

There are 100,000 Bald Eagles in North America with almost 60,000 in British Columbia and Alaska.

Bald Eagles are monogamous. They are generally believed to form long-lasting relationships with their mates, and may mate for life, although some pairs may split up and look for new mates, particularly after a failed nesting attempt. If one of the mates dies, the remaining bird will take another mate.



Eagles are sacred to First Nations people and were valued for their feathers which were used by medicine men, as part of ceremonial headdresses, in clothing and in snares.

1.6

A study of Bald Eagles in the Yukon have found that nests that successfully produce young average 1.6 birds per nest site

35

Eggs are incubated for 35 days before they hatch, between May and June

61, 32 & 7

61% of nests produce one fledgling, 32% produce two and 7% produce three

3 - 6

Eggs are laid over 3 - 6 days, generally sometime between April and May

8 - 14

Young are generally present in the nest for 8 - 14 weeks before they are developed enough to leave or 'fledge'.



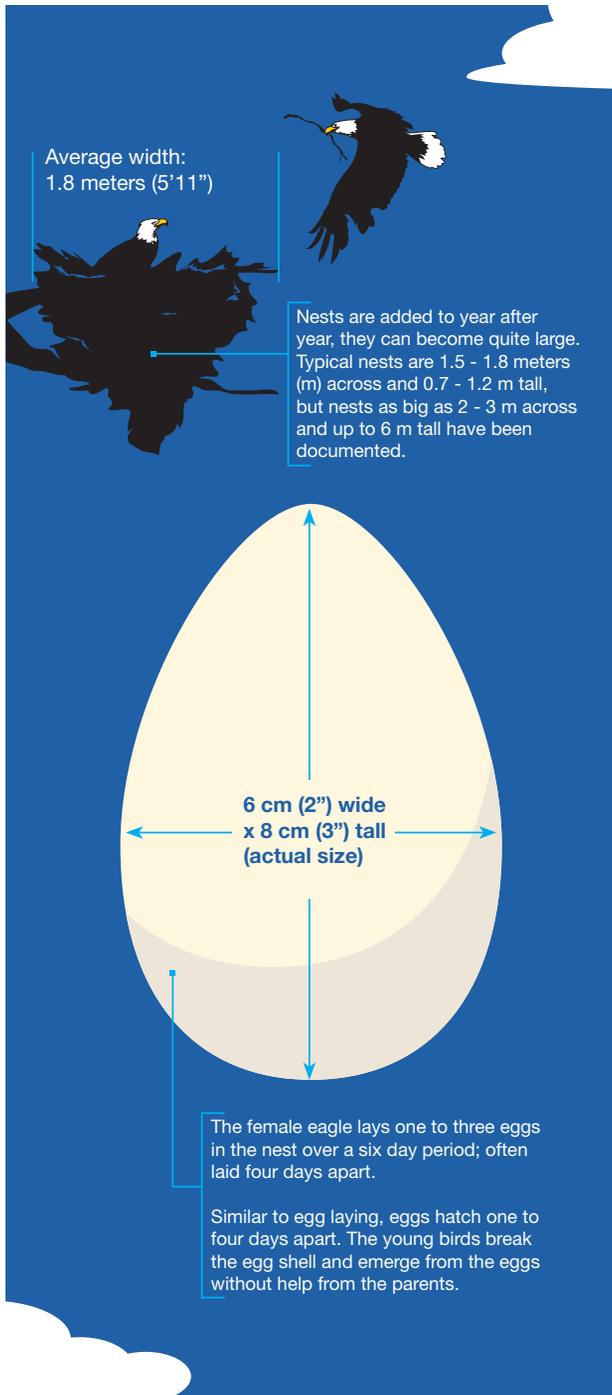
To repair the nest, the birds will collect sticks from the surrounding area, either from the ground or broken off of trees, and will interweave them into the nest. They may also line the nest with grasses, mosses or other materials.

When the eaglets first hatch, they are covered in a light gray down. At around 11 days, this initial down begins to be replaced by a second down which is thicker and dark gray. Dark brown body feathers begin to emerge at about four weeks, and feather development is generally not finished until after the young leave the nest.

For the first couple of weeks that the young are present, the female will remain at the nest nearly all of the time to protect against predators and to shield the young from rain, wind and sun. During this time, the male will provide most of the food to the nest. As the young develop, both adults will participate in hunting for food to feed the growing eaglets.

Since the eaglets typically hatch a couple of days apart, the first chick has a significant advantage in size over the others. The largest eaglet generally eats first, which can lead to delayed development of the second or third eaglet as the first gets more of the food. As a result, the older eaglet is often substantially larger than the younger ones, and when food is limited, the younger may starve to death. Occasionally, the larger eaglet may kill the smaller nestling's. This is most common early in the nestling period.

Several weeks prior to fledging, the young will begin flapping their wings and moving around the nest and nearby limbs, developing muscle strength, coordination and landing ability in preparation for flying.



For several weeks after fledging, the young will follow their parents, observing them and learning how and where to hunt. During this time, the adults will continue to feed the young.

In southern regions of North America, pairs may make a second nesting attempt if the eggs are lost early in the season; however, in northern locations like the Yukon, this rarely occurs since the breeding season is so short.

ATCO and protecting Bald Eagles in the Yukon

In 2006 heavy rains and winds collapsed an eagle's nest on the Millennium Trail. The two eaglets in the nest were not ready to fly and were stranded on the ground until local officials spotted them. Yukon Electrical crews helped rescue the eaglets and eventually donated a electric pole and assisted in the construction of the new permanent base. Since then, YECL crew have unofficially adopted the nest and continue to monitor and maintain the nest when necessary.

In 2012, the Yukon Electrical Whitehorse office installed a web camera to give the community a bird's eye view of the eagles. Live viewing began in May of 2013 after a pair of eagles moved into the nest earlier in the year. People at Yukon Electrical are pleased to present these captivating images to the public. Our thanks go to the various organizations that participated in the successful implementation of our Bald Eagle nest. The City of Whitehorse, Environment Yukon, EDI, TundraTech and Absolute Security helped with consultation, education and access.

Yukon Electrical Company Limited has been providing electrical service to Yukoners for over a century and is a member of the ATCO Group of Companies. ATCO works with government and environmental groups to create and maintain an Avian Protection Plan. Initiatives within the plan include diverting birds from

electrical equipment, carefully moving nest sites and creating appropriate nest habitats. A few of the species that benefit from this program include Bald Eagles, Osprey, the Ferruginous Hawk and Swans.

Yukon Electrical employees erected a man-made Bald Eagle nest on a pole in downtown Whitehorse after storms destroyed a nearby nest. The hope was that the project would be a suitable replacement to keep the Bald Eagles from nesting in nearby power lines as an alternative.

To attract the resident eagles, much care went into building the man-made structure. Only a season after the pole went up, a pair of Northern Bald Eagles began nesting in Whitehorse.

In 2013, Yukon Electrical launched its Eagle Cam. Throughout the spring and summer, you can watch the Yukon Electrical Bald Eagles live on the Yukon Electrical Eagle Cam online at www.yukonelectrical.com



Not all nests that are active early in the breeding season produce young. One study in the southern Yukon found that 72% of nests were successful in raising at least one young bird through nest departure.

Yukon Electrical Company Limited has been providing electrical service to Yukoners for over a century and is a member of the ATCO Group of Companies. ATCO works with government and environmental groups to create and maintain an Avian Protection Plan. Initiatives within the plan include diverting birds from electrical equipment, carefully moving nest sites and creating appropriate nest habitats.

To see the Bald Eagles in Whitehorse, visit our youtube channel at www.youtube.com/YukonElectrical or watch the live feed online at www.yukonelectrical.com



GET TO KNOW ATCO IN THE NORTH - WWW.ATCO.COM

UTILITIES | ENERGY | STRUCTURES & LOGISTICS | TECHNOLOGIES

ATCO Structures & Logistics | ATCO Sustainable Communities | ATCO Australia | ATCO Electric

ATCO Energy Solutions | ATCO Gas | ATCO Pipelines | ATCO Power | ATCO I-Tek | Northland Utilities | Yukon Electrical

