Bald Eagle Information

The bald eagle ***(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)***, our [national bird](http://www.baldeagleinfo.com/eagle/eagle9.html), is the only eagle unique to North America. The bald eagle's **scientific name** signifies a sea *(halo)* eagle *(aeetos)* with a white*(leukos)* head. At one time, the word "bald" meant "white," not hairless. Bald eagles are found throughout most of North America, from Alaska and Canada to northern Mexico. About half of the world's 70,000 bald eagles live in Alaska. Combined with British Columbia's population of about 20,000, the northwest coast of North America is by far their greatest stronghold for bald eagles. They flourish here in part because of the salmon. Dead or dying fish are an important food source for all bald eagles.
   Eagles are a member of the ***Accipitridae* family**; which also includes hawks, kites, and old-world vultures.
   Scientists loosely divide eagles into four groups based on their physical characteristics and behavior. The bald eagle is a **sea or fish eagle**.
   There are two subspecies of bald eagles. The "southern" bald eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus leucocephalus,* is found in the Gulf States from Texas and Baja California across to South Carolina and Florida, south of 40 degrees north latitude. The "northern" bald eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus alascanus,* is found north of 40 degrees north latitude across the entire continent. The largest numbers of northern bald eagles are in the Northwest, especially in Alaska. The "northern" bald eagle is slightly larger than the "southern" bald eagle.

Studies have shown that "northern" bald eagles fly into the southern states and Mexico, and the "southern" bald eagles fly north into Canada. Because of these finding, the subspecies of "northern" and "southern" bald eagles has been discontinued in recent literature.
   Bald eagles were officially declared an endangered species in 1967 in all areas of the United States south of the 40th parallel, under a law that preceded the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
   Until 1995, the bald eagle had been listed as endangered under the [Endangered Species Act](http://www.fws.gov/Endangered/esa.html) in 43 of the 48 lower states, and listed as threatened in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Washington and Oregon. In July of 1995, the US Fish and Wildlife Service upgraded the status of bald eagles in the lower 48 states to "threatened."
   On June 28, 2007 the [Interior Department](http://www.fws.gov/news/newsreleases/showNews.cfm?newsId=72DC904E-AB92-7988-2C3E64B66C76E0F8) took the American bald eagle off the Endangered Species List. The bald eagle will still be protected by the[Migratory Bird Treaty Act](http://laws.fws.gov/lawsdigest/migtrea.html) and the [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Eagle/guidelines/bgepa.html). The Bald Eagle Protection Act prohibits the take, transport, sale, barter, trade, import and export, and possession of eagles, making it illegal for anyone to collect eagles and eagle parts, nests, or eggs without a [permit](http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/law/eagle/). Native Americans are able to possess these emblems which are traditional in their culture.

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