

The Bald Eagle is becoming a more common breeding and overwintering bird in the Hudson River Valley.

Conservation Status

Although recently removed from the federal list of endangered species, the Bald Eagle is listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need and as Threatened in New York. NY Breeding Bird Atlas data indicate an increase in distribution throughout the state as well as in the Hudson River Valley.

Identification

This large raptor is dark brown overall with a white head, white tail, and a large bright yellow bill and yellow feet. Immatures are dark brown overall with variable amounts of light splotching and a gray bill. Adult plumage is not reached until the bird is 4-5 years old. Their call is a weak, thin squeal.



Bald Eagle populations have grown in recent years in the Hudson Valley.

Habitat

The Bald Eagle can be found in wooded areas close to large lakes, rivers, and estuaries. It commonly uses tall, easily accessible trees adjacent to water for nesting, perching, and roosting. It prefers areas with minimal human disturbance and may abandon its nest if there is human activity around the nest site. In the winter it is found near rivers and large bodies of water if open water persists, or if food resources such as deer carcasses are present. Roost sites are located away from houses and roads.

Food

Primary food sources are fishes, injured waterfowl and seabirds, various mammals, and carrion. They are opportunistic feeders and will hunt live prey, scavenge, and pirate food from other birds.

Nesting

The nest is a large structure made out of sticks and lined with twigs, mosses, grasses, and feathers. It is usually located high in a tall, live white pine tree near water. The nest is reused and added to each year, often becoming eight or more feet deep and ten feet wide and can weigh several tons. Both sexes share nest building incubation, brooding, and feeding duties.

Threats

- Loss of shoreline nesting, perching, roosting, and associated aquatic foraging habitat to human development.
- Disturbance by humans.
- Collisions with high-speed trains, towers, wind generators and electrical lines.

Management Recommendations

- Minimize human disturbance at breeding and wintering sites.
- Avoid the addition of new, tall structures such as wind-generators, towers and electrical lines near breeding and wintering locations.
- Protect nest sites using buffer zones. Recommendations on buffer size vary. Some have suggested 100-200m around a nest, but others advocate for larger buffers.
- Monitor populations through counts of breeding pairs and young produced annually by participating in NYS DEC surveys.

This management summary is adapted from Buehler 200, NatureServe 2008 and NYNHP 2008.

For additional information, see the following references:

Buehler, David A. 2000. Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/506>.

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Thompson, C .M., P. E. Nye, B. A. Schmidt, D. K. Garcelon. 2005. Foraging ecology of bald eagles in a freshwater tidal system. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 69:609-617.

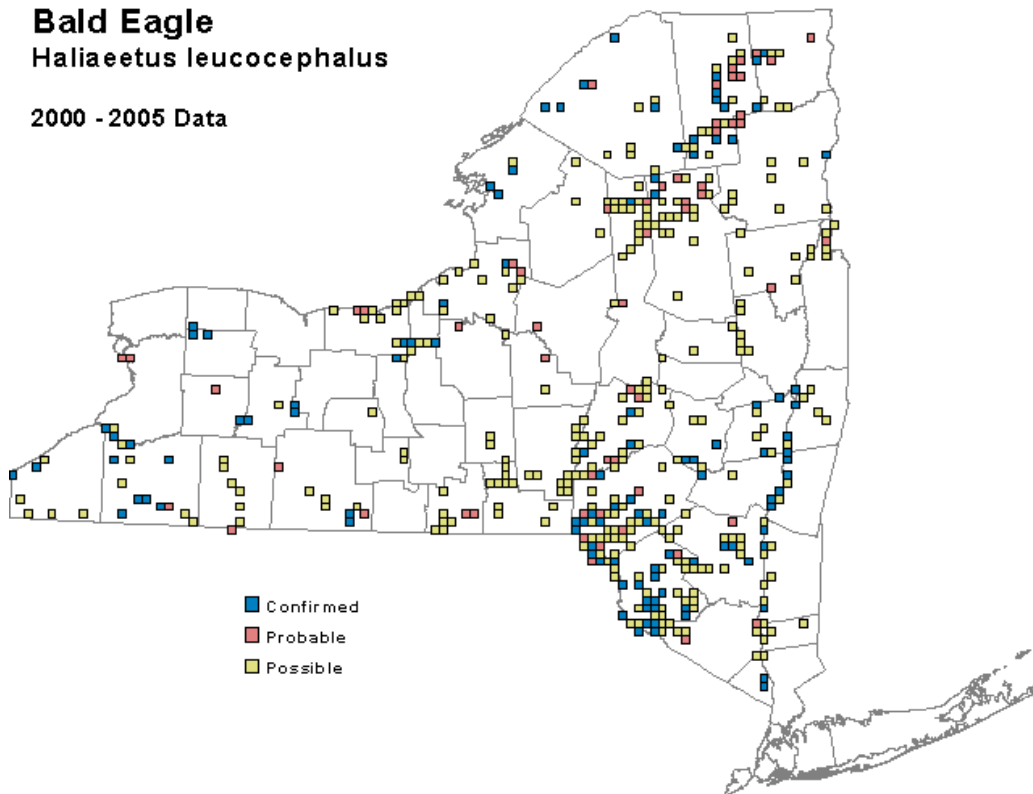
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Thompson, C. M.; McGarigal, K. 2002. [The influence of research scale on Bald Eagle habitat selection along the lower Hudson River, New York \(USA\)](#). *Landscape Ecology* 17:569-586.

NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Bald Eagle
Haliaeetus leucocephalus

2000 - 2005 Data



Bald Eagle
Haliaeetus leucocephalus

1980 - 1985 Data

