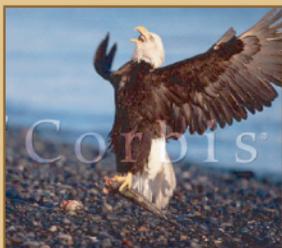


Masters of Water and Sky

Eagles are strong swimmers, using their large wings like paddles. They also use their wings to guard their food.



At the Top of the Food Chain

Since each link in the food chain accumulates chemicals from the lower links, eagles are more easily exposed to toxic chemicals in the environment. In the lower 48 states, the birds nearly died out due to pesticides that made eggshells too brittle to hatch.



With the banning of these toxins and other restrictions, eagle populations have grown to over 6,000 breeding pairs today. Bald eagles are thriving for now.



Our national bird, the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), is found only in North America. After Alaska, the Pacific Northwest coast boasts their largest population. Eagles depend on dead or dying fish for food and may thrive here due to the salmon population.

Adult eagles weigh from nine to twelve pounds, with a wingspan of about seven feet. Reaching flight speeds of up to 30 miles per hour, they can dive at speeds near 100 mph. With their keen eyesight, eagles see four times farther than people, spotting fish up to one mile away.



Look for eagles fishing in the lake or flying overhead.



As if spring-loaded, a bald eagle's talons lock onto their prey on contact. They cannot release until the eagle pushes down on a hard surface. Since a bald eagle can lift only about four pounds, pursuing too large a fish could actually drown the bird.