

Bald Eagles

The Second Continental Congress chose the Bald Eagle as the National Emblem of the United States in 1782. It was chosen because it is the only eagle unique to North America. Now, the bald eagle is the living symbol of our nation's freedoms, spirit and pursuit of excellence.

Bald Eagles live near rivers, lakes, marshes, and coasts where there are plenty of fish to eat and tall trees for nesting and roosting. Most of the world's bald eagles live in Alaska or along the Northwest Coast of the U.S. and British Columbia. They flourish there because of the salmon, an important food source. Still, there are many bald eagles to see in Colorado. They arrive in winter and scavenge along shore of lakes, rivers, and reservoirs for stranded fish and injured waterfowl. They also come to breed.

Bald Eagles mate for life. They build large nests, called eyries, at the top of sturdy tall trees. They often use large, mature cottonwoods or pines for their nests.

New nests average about two feet deep and five feet across. They are an immense pile of sticks lined with dirt, grass, moss, feathers, and other soft materials. The nests become larger as the eagles return year after year and add new nesting materials. Eventually, some nests reach sizes of more than 10 feet wide and can weigh several tons!

The female lays one to three eggs, usually two, about three to four days apart. Both parents incubate the eggs for about 35 days. After the eggs hatch, the parents take turns hunting and feeding the young. Eaglets are full size and strong enough to fly at 12 weeks of age. Sometimes only one of the young fledges. The first born is stronger and larger and gets more the attention from the adults.

