

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Upper Mississippi River

*National Wildlife
& Fish Refuge*

Bald Eagle Facts



Mature and Immature Bald Eagles
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Bald Eagle Facts

Life Span: 20 to 30 years

Size: 6 to 8 foot wingspan; 8 to 14 pounds; one of the largest birds in North America

Identification: Mature eagles have a brown body with white head and tail feathers; immature eagles, those under 5 years old, have mottled brown and white feathers

Nest: About 4 feet wide and 3 feet or more deep; weighs hundreds of pounds; built in the tallest trees near water

Eggs: 1 to 4 laid February to March; 35 days incubation; young fledge in 12 weeks

Diet: Prefer fish but may take small mammals, waterfowl, and dead animals

Feeding: Catch prey with their talons; swallow small prey whole; with their beak they tear bite size pieces off of large prey

In 1972 there was only one active eagle nest on the refuge, today there are more than 200! Strong endangered species laws, conservation efforts and the banning of DDT pesticide brought the bald eagle back from the edge of extinction.

Migratory eagles can be seen from November through March. Aerial displays and pair bonding are best viewed from January through March. In winter, over 1,000 bald eagles fish in the open water below the river's locks and dams.

Bald eagles are year round residents on the 260 mile long refuge because there is open water, plentiful food, tall trees for roosting and nesting and minimal disturbance.

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