

GENERAL INFORMATION



Photograph by Cindi Bateman

The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is on a list of Threatened Species by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. This classification means the bald eagle could become endangered without proper protection or management.

Protection of Cape Coral's bald eagles is important since Florida's nesting population constitutes over 80 percent of the entire bald eagle population within the southeastern United States.



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Description

Although smaller than northern eagles, the Southern Bald Eagle weighs 8-10 pounds with a wingspan of 6-7 feet. Females are larger than males, as with most raptors. The head and tails of adult eagles are white and their bodies are dark brown. Their eyes, feet and bill are yellow. Juveniles do not yet have the white head and tail, and are brown with scattered white feathers.



Photograph by Norman Bateman

Diet

Bald eagles are primarily fish eaters, preying occasionally on small mammals and

carrion. Eagles have been seen feeding on roadside kill alongside vultures.



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Breeding

Bald eagle nesting season runs October 1st through May 15th of the following year. Eagles mate for life and use the same site year after year, if the territory is available. In Florida, the eagles usually return in late September or early October.

One to three eggs are laid between late November and early January. The young eaglets hatch 32-34 days later and leave the nest in 11-12 weeks, usually by mid-May. The young birds wander northward as far as Canada and return by adulthood at 4-5 years of age. They find mates and initiate breeding in the vicinity where they were originally hatched.

It is not known how many eagles survive the first 4-5 years of life, but juvenile mortality is probably high as with most birds.

Protection

The main threat to bald eagles in Florida is loss of nesting habitat due to development. The U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission have established guidelines for protective zones around eagle nests with certain restrictions imposed to ensure continued success of those sites.



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In Cape Coral, eagles are also protected by city Ordinance 13-92 (Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23). Some of the Cape Coral eagles are somewhat “urbanized” and have had good nesting success with the regulations established. City regulations establish an eagle nest management zone that extends 1,100 feet in all directions from each eagle nest. Within any eagle nest management zone, heavy outdoor construction is prohibited during eagle nesting season. The

City may prohibit construction at any time within 350 feet of an eagle nest.

The following units (specific sections of Cape Coral) **may** be affected by eagle management zones:

28 54 58 63 70 72 73 90 90A

Property owners, real estate agents and contractors are encouraged to contact the Planning Division with any questions regarding eagle nest management zones. It is recommended that you call **prior to filing for a building permit or obtaining a construction loan** if you believe your property falls within any such zone.

Additional information on the study of suburban and rural eagle nesting success can be found at <http://wld.fwc.state.fl.us/eagle/>. The site details the travel patterns of selected bald eagles, including some Cape Coral eagles.

Questions

Malicious destruction of bald eagle nest sites or harassment of eagles should be reported to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission 24 hour Hotline at 1-888-404-FWCC (3922).

If you see a sick or injured eagle, please report C.R.O.W. (Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife) at 472-3644.

Cape Coral's BALD EAGLES



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