



## WILDLIFE WINDOW: Bald Eagle

The National Bird of the U.S.A.

Photo-story by the P&P Committee

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Each February, we commemorate the birthdays of two important Presidents. Is there a greater “Presidential” icon than the Bald Eagle? Rivendell is fortunate to have Bald Eagles nesting all around our community that are regularly seen soaring majestically overhead. Let’s learn more about this magnificent national bird.

The **Bald Eagle** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is a bird of prey found in North America. They are not actually bald; the name derives from an older meaning of the word, “white headed”. The adult is mainly brown with a white head and tail and hooked, yellow-colored beak. The male has a body length of about 28-40 inches and a wingspan of 6-8 feet. Females are about 25 percent larger than males. Youngsters have brown plumage, only developing their distinctive color pattern at 4-5 years of age.



(Photo by Sheila Pies)



(Photo by Bob Frank)

Northern birds are migratory, while in the south they are resident, remaining on their breeding territory all year. They are found in virtually any kind of American wetland habitat such as seacoasts, rivers, large lakes or marshes or other large bodies of open water with an abundance of fish. Florida has more bald eagles than any state except Alaska and Minnesota! It is an opportunistic carnivore and can consume a great variety of prey – although fish is the majority of its diet. The bald eagle is also a powerful flier – reaching speeds of 35–43 mph when gliding and flapping, and 30 mph while carrying fish.

In the late 20th century, they were on the brink of extinction in the contiguous United States. Fortunately, populations have since recovered and the species was removed from the endangered species list. In some North American cultures, the bald eagle is a sacred bird and its feathers are central to many religious and spiritual customs among Native Americans. Eagles are considered spiritual messengers between gods and humans by some cultures.

**Protect their Habitats.** Working together, we can keep our ponds and preserves healthy and attractive to these beautiful bald eagles and other wildlife friends, so we can enjoy their beauty AND keep our property values strong. We remind you to view the amazing P&P Wildlife Photo Gallery at [www.rivendellcommunity.com/ponds](http://www.rivendellcommunity.com/ponds).

**FUN FACT:** Largely because of its role as a symbol of the United States, but also because of its being a large predator, the bald eagle has many representations in popular culture. However, not all of these are accurate. In particular, the movie or television bald eagle typically has a bold, powerful cry. It actually has a much softer, chirpy voice, not in keeping with its popular image; so the call of the red-tailed hawk is often substituted in movies and television.

Photo by Bob Frank)

