

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Look for it now in Southwest Ohio!

7/4/2021



Adult and Immature Bald Eagles over Landen Lake, Photos by Ryan Meyer, [Ryan Meyer Photography](#)

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

By Shannon Russell Pennington, WCPD Staff Naturalist

A beloved symbol of freedom for many Americans, the bald eagle also holds a special significance for ecologists and naturalists worldwide.

Once on the brink of extinction due to habitat degradation, illegal hunting, and the effects of the pesticide DDT, bald eagles have made an amazing recovery over the past 60 years. Conservationist Rachel Carson's groundbreaking book *Silent Spring*, the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the enactment of the Endangered Species Act all played a part in their recovery.

Through continued efforts, bald eagles are a fairly common sight once again, with 707 nests documented in Ohio in 2020. It is arguably the ultimate conservation success story.

To learn more about this species, visit [page 29 of the Ohio Division of Wildlife's Raptors of Ohio Field Guide](#) and the [ODNR website](#).

FUN FACTS

- Bald eagles get their name from "piebald," a word that describes animals with white patches
- Their wingspan can exceed seven feet and they can weigh up to 17 lbs
- They develop their iconic plumage with a striking white head and tail when they are about four years old
- Their nests are the largest of any North American bird, measuring up to six feet wide and four feet high
- Their keen eyesight, sharp talons, and huge beak are perfectly adapted for hunting fish, their favorite food
- Although bald eagles were officially removed from the Endangered and Threatened Species list in 2007, they are still protected. Fines for illegally hunting one can reach up to \$250,000.