

2. In describing a bird don't copy the description from a field guide. The impression given is that the bird was not very carefully scrutinized. Try to include descriptive details which you have never seen in print.
3. Try to get confirmation of the sighting. A good photograph is unbeatable as evidence.
4. Notify local birders quickly so that other observers can confirm the identification.

BALD EAGLE AND PEREGRINE FALCON UPDATE

At present, the federal government offers the rosiest prospects for the Bald Eagle that it has advanced in several years. According to reports issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service, there are approximately 1000 nesting pairs in the lower 48 states. Eagle populations in Chesapeake Bay, parts of Florida, the Pacific Northwest and the northern interior of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan are holding steady, with possible gains in the Minnesota population. On the other hand, breeding populations in the Northeast, on the Great Lakes shores, and in the Southeast (except parts of Florida and Louisiana) are either declining or gone.

These 1000 nests mean that 2000 adult eagles are involved in breeding. Since eagles do not breed until they are five years old, there must be about 3000 eagles in the sub-adult pool, working their way toward maturity. These two figures together yield a total Bald Eagle population estimate of 5000 individuals for the contiguous United States.

The estimate for the year 1965 was likewise 5000 individuals, but that does not mean that the population remained steady over the past eight years. In fact, there is considerable evidence that numbers actually declined steadily until 1970, and have advanced slowly since then.

The Bald Eagles nesting in Merrymeeting Bay in Maine have become so polluted with pesticides that they can no longer produce viable eggs. Shells break as soon as the female sits upon them. Maine, however, abandoned the use of DDT and dieldrin in 1970, and it is therefore possible that the environment has cleared enough that young eagles can mature and become reproductively viable. In a new and bold experiment this year, the Fish and Wildlife Service gathered six sturdier eggs from nests in the Chippewa National Forest in Minnesota and transplanted them to the Maine nests. At last report, the foster parents had accepted the eggs and were incubating them. The Minnesota birds will, of course, re-lay, so that no loss in that population is envisioned.

A recent technological breakthrough has enabled man to breed Peregrine Falcons in captivity. Last year's breeding projects produced 20 birds, and it is now imperative that biologists determine where and how captive-reared birds can be returned to the wild.

Peregrine Falcons, like Bald Eagles, are at the top of a food chain and are hence extremely susceptible to contamination by pesticides. Experts at a recent conference in Greenwich, Connecticut, reported that only large cities are sufficiently free of these pollutants to risk a transplant of birds. So the day may soon arrive when these superb predators will nest on the skyscraper "cliffs" of downtown Boston, Hartford and Providence, using the ubiquitous city Rock Doves as their primary food source.

(Condensed from material supplied by Massachusetts Audubon Society)

J.T.L.