

THE BALD EAGLE
(HALICEETUS LEUCOCEPHALUS)
IT'S NESTING SUCCESS IN OHIO
1975 THROUGH 1980
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The purpose of this article is to update a previous article of mine on this subject which was published in the 1974 Toledo Naturalist's Association Yearbook. In that article I detailed the nesting success of the Ohio Lake Erie Bald Eagle from 1959 through 1974. In this present article I cover the years 1975 through 1980. I have in the article below summarized some of the information that appeared in the previous article. Now that the nest sites are well known and generally are protected, I have chosen to describe these later years by individual nest site rather than group all of the nests into a year by year list as I had previously done.

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Lucas County

The peak of the nesting population of the bald eagle in the Ohio Lake Erie marsh region occurred in 1959. At that time this "pair" was nesting in Crane Creek State Park. In 1963 this nest site was abandoned probably do to human disturbance (visitors hit the nest tree with sticks to make the female fly) and this pair built a new nest in the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. In 1959, 1961 and 1963 this pair was unsuccessful. In 1962 they raised one young. There is no accurate information for 1960. Between 1963 and 1974 this pair remained in the Refuge. In 1974 this "pair" moved its nest site near its present location on the northern dike of the Refuge. In that year it raised one young, something that it had not done since 1969.

In 1975 and 1976 two young were raised and banded each year. The nest was abandoned in May of 1977 (although the female was seen incubating in March) and an adult and immature were seen together that winter. During a January storm in 1978 the nest was blown down and a new nest was later built near the old site. This is the present nest you see today. Again there was incubation but no young and the nest abandoned. An old male was found dead near the nest site during this year. In 1979 one young was raised and banded. An eaglet transplant from Patuxent was considered but abandoned as the age variation was to large. This year two young were raised and banded. This pair is the most successful in this area since 1974 despite building new nests and changing mates. Seven young have been fledged in the last six years.

Carroll Township, Ottawa County

This "pair" had not successfully raised young for over a decade prior to 1975. In 1976 its eggs were collected and analyzed and found to contain three different contaminates, any one of which caused hatching failure. The female was electrocuted in 1977 when she flew into wires. The male took a new mate in 1978, built a new nest one-half mile east of the last site (built in 1976, two miles north of old site) and raised one young for the first time in over thirteen years. It was banded. Again in 1979 one young was raised and banded. This year both adults have been observed in and around the nest but there is no evidence of egg laying or incubating.

Ottawa Shooting Club, Sandusky County

This "pair" has existed in Sandusky County since at least 1959 when they nested at Graveyard Island, Riley Township. Between 1969 and 1973 they were unsuccessful. In 1974 they built a new nest at this site in a woodlot and raised one young. In 1975 there was no evidence of incubation and the nest was abandoned. A new nest was built in 1976 one mile west of the old site in a pin oak. Both adults were reported at the nest but no other activity. In 1977 the adult female was seen copulating with an immature male and one young was raised and banded. Again in 1978 one young was raised and banded but the oak was now dead from standing in water. No young were raised in 1979. This year during the winter the nest blew out but the pair built a new one in the same woodlot. Two young were raised and banded: One from this pair and one as a transplant from Patuxent in May.

Rest Haven, Sandusky County.

This nest site has been active since at least 1959. It was unsuccessful in 1970, 1971, and 1972. In 1973 two young were raised. During the winter of this year the female was electrocuted and the site was inactive until 1976 when a female was seen incubating on the old nest in an aged sycamore. The nest was abandoned without young. In 1977 incubation was again seen. Again the nest was abandoned but young were thought to have hatched but died. A new nest was built in 1978 one mile northwest of the old site in an oak but again incubation, hatching, death and abandonment. 1979 brought a return to the old nest in the sycamore but with the same results. Again this year the results were the same but the eagles returned to the new nest in the oak.

Whites Landing, Sandusky County

In 1975 a female eagle was seen incubating in a nest on this site. This was the first time this site had been used by eagles. One young was raised and banded. During 1976 and 1977 incubation, copulation and the presence of both birds was observed but each year the nest was abandoned. By 1978 Great Horned Owls were seen in this nest and one of the pair was killed by hitting wires during flight. There has been no activity at this site since.

Winous Point, Ottawa County

This site had been previously used by eagles successfully as late as 1970 when one young was raised and banded here. However, in 1971, 1972 and 1973 it was unsuccessful.

In 1974, the female was injured during the nesting season and unable to fly. She was held in a pen until recovered and then released. She resumed nesting but was unsuccessful. During her recuperation a leg band was discovered which showed she was raised in 1969 from a pair in Erie County.

In 1975 a new small nest was reported on the south side of Sandusky Bay but no incubation was observed. Then exhibiting extremely unusual behavior, a pair built a nest on the ground in a soy bean field in 1976. Two eggs were laid but destroyed by ground predators. The nest was a small mound of vegetation. This stimulated the construction of an artificial nesting tower near this ground nest. This platform was never used. The birds built a small nest in a honey locust tree in 1977 this time on the north side of the Bay and then disappeared without evidence of incubation. No active nest has existed

on this site since 1977.

Little Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge, Lucas County

This site was used by eagles off and on from 1959 through 1973 but without nesting success. In the fall of 1979 an adult and an immature were seen in this area defending territory. This year a nest was built in a dead cottonwood but no other nesting activity was seen.

Summary

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of pairs present</u>	<u>No. of young fledged</u>
1959	15	5
1960	9	7 (no records for Erie or Lucas)
1961	5	3 (no records for Erie or Sandusky)
1962	11	4
1963	11	0
1964	5	2 (no records for Sandusky or Lucas)
1965	10	5
1966	13	5
1967	7	4
1968	7	5
1969	6	2
1970	6	1
1971	8	0
1972	6	0
1973	7	2
1974	6	2
1975	4	3
1976	6	2
1977	6	1
1978	5	2
1979	5	2
1980	5	4 (one transplant)

I wrote these words in 1974:

"When the eagles had no success in 1971 and 1972, I thought it would be only a matter of time until this isolated population would disappear. Then in 1973 and 1974 young began to appear again and now I am hopeful that some of the hurdles are past and the eagles will be here in the future."

One thing that is presently happening is the use of all of the surplus young birds to replace those adults in the pairs that have died. This has prevented, at least for the present, any increase in the number of pairs.

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