

NRSC Wildlife Watch

The Bald Eagle

By Judy Merrifield, NRSC Volunteer Writer

The bald eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, is considered a symbol of our American liberties and freedom. As of December 24, 2024, the bald eagle is officially the national bird of the US, after President Joe Biden signed a law bestowing the honor upon the stunning bird of prey.

What a sight to behold, with its 7 to 8 foot wingspan and striking white head. Adult eagles range from 8-13 pounds and are 3 feet tall with the females being larger than the males. Eagles have a lifespan of up to 30 years and mate for life.

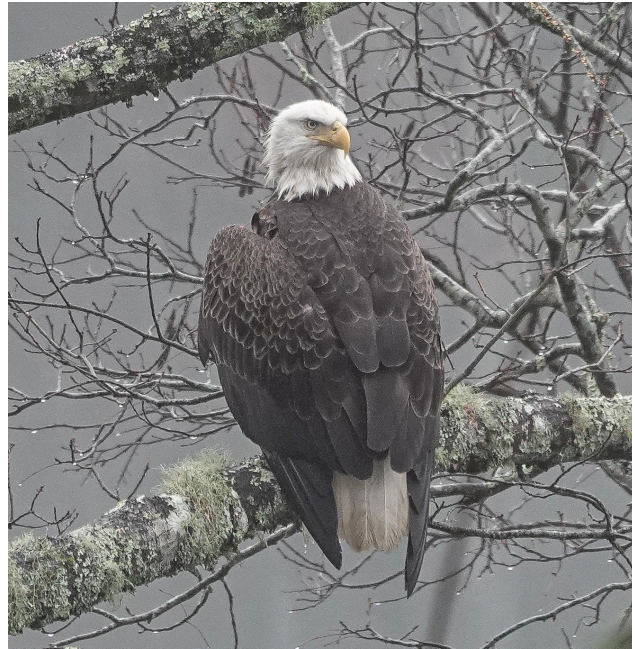
In WNC there are at least 32 known eagle nests located along lakes, large rivers, and shorelines of sounds and bays. Their nests are approximately 6-8 feet wide and 2-3 feet deep, so it is not hard to spot one high in isolated trees. Adult pairs may migrate or stay near their nesting territory year-round, returning to the same location to enlarge and reinforce their nest. In NC, nesting begins as early as October and runs through January, resulting in one to three eggs that should hatch after 30 to 40 days of incubation. Both parents take turns brooding, guarding, and feeding their young and if food is plentiful, the nestlings will fledge in about 11 weeks.

In March you may be lucky enough to spot a young eagle. Youngsters don't develop their full look of a white tail and head till the age of 4-5 years. Look for wings that are flat when the bird is soaring, so you do not confuse it with a vulture. Since the use of the pesticide DDT was banned, the eagle population has begun to recover.

Eagle Trivia

- The term "eagle eye" is used because eagles have perfect focus with a wide field of vision, and they can see ultraviolet light.
- Eagles are scavengers and opportunist hunters, stealing food from birds by flying upside down and grabbing the prey right out of their talons.
- The largest recorded bald eagle nest was in Florida, which measured over 8 feet across, nearly 18 feet tall, and weighed almost 2 tons.

For more interesting information about the habits and habitats of this majestic bird visit [NCW Bald Eagle Species Profile](#).



Bald Eagle on Lake Ticoa
Photo Courtesy CF Resident Deane Freudenberg

Will Your Home Be a Fast-Food Drive-Thru this Spring?

As spring approaches, bears' alarm clocks are ticking down to awake them from winter slumber. Black bears have already been on the move here in CF. So it's not too soon to be "bearwise" and prepare your home and yard to reduce the chances that famished bears will find your property just the ticket to fill up their empty bellies.

Garbage - Once bears find easy pickings from a garbage or recycling container, be assured the guilty parties will become repeat offenders. If you must leave the garbage can in an open area



for pick up, you'll want a bear-resistant container. Otherwise, garbage needs to be in a bear-resistant location, such as a secure basement or garage. Bears will enter an open garage, so if you keep your containers there, securely close all doors after entering and exiting.

Birdseed Feeders - Think of a bird feeder as a bear's drive-thru at a fast food restaurant. When bears are active, as they will be soon, remove your feeders. Seed, grain and suet provide a lot of calories for bears, just like that double bacon cheeseburger, so don't give bears the incentive to come into your yard to rob a bird feeder. Take down the feeder and instead offer birds nesting boxes, a water feature, or plant a bird garden for food and shelter.

Pet Food - As with bird seed, pet food is a concentrated source of calories, and tasty! Do not leave your dog or cat food outdoors or in an open garage. Expecting a delivery from Chewy? If you can't be home to take that "delicious" box inside, ask a neighbor to put the box in your closed garage or inside a bear resistant container you may have outside. Your pets can smell through the box. So can bears!

Grills and Smokers - After cooking, turn the burners on high to burn off food residue before shutting off the gas. Bears can smell outdoor cooking aromas from miles away. Remove the grease pan and don't dump it in your yard. When not using it, cover your cleaned grill and smoker.



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Vehicles - If you park a vehicle outdoors, don't leave food or trash inside. Bears can and will get into your car or truck if they smell food. Some bears have been taught by their mother how to open car doors. And if that doesn't work, it doesn't take much effort on a bear's part to smash a window or tear through a truck bed cover.

Your best defense is to be aware of what around your home and yard is an invitation for spring-time hungry bears. If it crosses your mind that something may attract a bear, act. Bring the boat cooler inside. Don't drop a garbage bag by your car to run back inside the house. And do consider alternate ways to enjoy "your birds." Bird feeders will become "Bear Feeders."

For more ideas and information on how to make your property "Bearwise," [click here](#). And if you want to be a good neighbor not just to our bears, but also to our community members, pass along these [FREE Bearwise flyers and fact sheets](#). (Photos courtesy of Bearwise.org)

Exploring the NRSC Website

Connesteefallsnrs.com is where you can find information about the Natural Resources Stewardship Committee, the work it has done and what it is working on now.

On the home page you're welcomed with the NRSC vision, goals, the Stewardship Plan and Community Action Plan. Along the top menu you may select a topic and click on the drop-down menu for more options.

The Education section provides information about the three primary goals, which are to keep wildlife wild, protect water resources, and protect native habitats. With the assistance of resident specialists, the NRSC has developed activities that are unique to this community such as Focus on Connestee outdoor events and Self-Guided Nature Challenges.

For example, you can click on the [Activities](#) tab to access "scavenger hunt" style challenges and see what you can find in the forest during different seasons. We suggest trying the "What's Green in Winter?" challenge now. Simply download and/or print out the checklist and accompanying photo page and go out on a family adventure. If on-line, you can access more information about each item on the checklist by clicking on the blue links above the photographs. Remember, when walking on the trails to "Take Only Pictures and Leave Only Footprints."

Be sure to check out the [Initiatives](#) tab where you will find information about the NRSC's work such as the preliminary Forest Management Presentation, deer management efforts, invasive species management efforts, and the development of bird sanctuary areas.

If you have questions, comments, concerns, or kudos, please email cfpoanrsc2021@gmail.com.

