



Bald Eagles of the Hudson River



Adult bald eagle takes off from tree

The same elements that support breeding pairs - clean air and water, ample food supply, large undisturbed stands of trees - also attract bald eagles looking for a winter home.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Hudson River region still provides tracts of relatively undisturbed land for roosting, perching and nesting. Some of these tracts have been purchased by New York State to protect bald eagles. These habitats are especially attractive during winter, when human activity is limited.

Each year, bald eagles migrate from their northern nesting areas to New York's rivers and reservoirs in search of open water, food and roosting sites. Even during the coldest months, open water can be found near power plants that discharge water during energy production, or where the natural flows of tributaries enter the river. In recent winters, more than 100 wintering eagles have been counted along the lower Hudson.

In 1997, a nesting pair produced the first eagle born along the Hudson River in more than 100 years. In 2005, 12 pairs nested and 18 eaglets were fledged along the river.

In recent years, the stretch of the Hudson from Kingston to Croton has been increasingly popular with bald eagles, probably because sections of the river are kept open by discharges from power plants, and railroad tracks provide an ample supply of dead animals (carrion) for scavenging eagles.



Bald eagles prefer wooded

areas near water, with tall trees for nesting and perching

Popular Eagle Viewing Areas Along the Hudson

Some popular spots for viewing eagles along the Hudson River are:

- Norrie Point State Park, Hyde Park
- Constitution Island from North Dock, West Point
- Route 6/202 overlook above Iona Island
- Riverfront Park, Peekskill
- Charles Point/China Pier, Peekskill
- Verplank waterfront
- George's Island Park parking area, Verplank
- Also, Metro-North and Amtrack commuters have an excellent vantage point from the river side of any train between Albany and Croton-on-Hudson.

The apparent return of the bald eagle to the Hudson River does not mean that conservation practices can end. Though growing numbers of eagles are good news, potential problems for eagles persist.

Increasing human activity, chemical/toxic contaminants and habitat loss must be monitored and controlled if we want to encourage the eagle population on the Hudson. Conservation, research, education and outreach can help the eagle survive on the Hudson River and elsewhere.

Cooperators in the Hudson River Bald Eagle Program include:

- U. S. Military Academy at West Point
- The Greenway Conservancy
- Hudson River Foundation
- National Audubon Society Constitution Marsh
- DEC Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Palisades Interstate Park Commission/Bear Mountain State Park
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service