

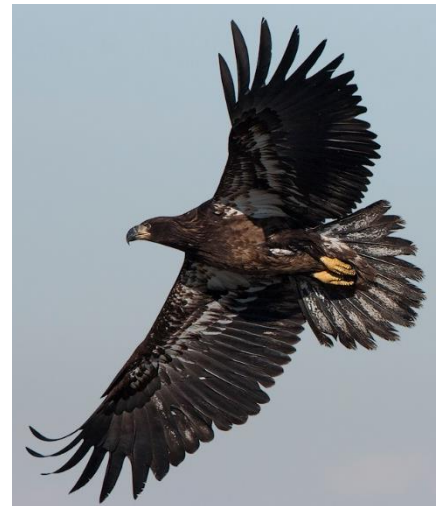
## Bald Eagle Ages



The classic full adult plumage of the Bald Eagle is not complete until the eagle is five years old. From five years and older, all Bald Eagle appear the same. Females can be up to 1/3 larger.



**First -Year Bald Eagles** – dark all over the first few months with dark eyes & bill. Over their first winter, they start to develop white “wing pits” and tail color but still have a dark belly

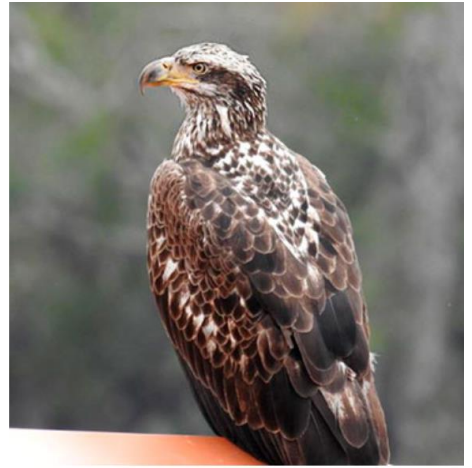


**Second-Year Bald Eagles** – develop a white belly and dark hood with the key

ID point of an uneven, ragged trailing edge to the wing as the longer first-year feathers are molted for shorter adult wing feathers. Their eyes begin to lighten. A white triangle may be seen on the upper back.



**Third-Year Bald Eagles** – also have a white belly and wingpits but begin to gain a darker body and wings with a whiter head and tail. They can show an “Osprey-like” mask, a dark line through the eye in 3<sup>rd</sup>



or 4<sup>th</sup> year. The bill begins turning yellow.

Sometimes wing feathers are uneven in length in between molts (as seen to left) but not as much as seen on second-year birds.



**Important Note** – Bald Eagle plumages can be highly variable and differences between 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year birds can be blended in some individual birds.

**Fourth-Year Bald Eagles** – Bald eagles are especially variable during the 4<sup>th</sup> year as individual birds progress faster or slower toward full adult plumage.



Left – Very dark 4<sup>th</sup> year bird in Jan (Photo: Tom Warren)  
Below, center – 4<sup>th</sup> year bird in 4<sup>th</sup> spring



Above – another 4<sup>th</sup> year bird