

BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY
Site Environmental Report **2018**
VOLUME 1



The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) has been the proud national emblem of the United States of America since 1792. These majestic birds can have a wingspan from six to seven and a half feet and can live up to 20 years. They reach breeding age around four years of age and often mate for life, with nesting occurring in late winter. Eagles eat a variety of foods from fish to carrion. Eagle populations were historically impacted by shooting, the presence of heavy metals in waterways and, most significantly, by pesticides like DDT that caused thinning of egg shells.

Here on Long Island, the bald eagle population has made a notable return, after being absent for nearly 100 years in New York State.

At one time, the species flourished in New York, but, as noted, the widespread use of pesticides and heavy metals in the early to mid-20th century nearly wiped out the bald eagle population, then reduced to just one nesting pair in the state. Bald eagles were listed as Federally Endangered in the 1960's.

Thanks to the ban of DDT in 1972, and the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Bald Eagle Restoration Program which imported breeding birds to NYS from 1976 to 1989, the bald eagle population has grown to unprecedented levels, with more than 323 pairs of bald eagles nesting across NYS as of 2017.

In 1999, bald eagles were down listed to threatened in New York, and removed from the Federal Endangered List in 2007.

The resurgence appears to be on a sustained upward trend. According to the DEC, in 2010, New York had 173 breeding pairs which produced 244 fledglings (i.e., a young bird that has just grown the feathers needed to fly and is capable of surviving outside the nest), and that each year, bald eagles produce about ten percent more fledglings than the year before.

While most of these birds can be found upstate, a notable number of eagles have been spotted on Long Island over the past ten years. The first nesting of bald eagles was observed on Gardiner's Island, off the shores of East Hampton on Eastern Long Island, in 2006. In 2013, two nests were observed on Long Island, and by 2018, eight nesting pairs were counted.

While Long Island is a widely developed area, it still has hundreds of acres of undeveloped or protected land, plentiful rivers and waterways and fish populations, all of which provide a quality habitat for the next generation of eagles.

Since 2017, bald eagles have been seen on the Brookhaven National Laboratory site, mostly in winter. In 2018, a pair of young eagles were routinely observed at the National Weather Service and the Sewage Treatment Plant onsite. The nearest known nesting pairs are at the William Floyd Estate and the Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge in Shirley, NY, just south of the Lab.

The bald eagle joins a variety of denizens onsite, including turkey, deer, and groundhog, to name a few.

The Brookhaven National Laboratory 2018 Site Environmental Report is a public document that is distributed to various U.S. Department of Energy sites, local libraries, and local regulators and stakeholders. The report is available to the general public on the internet at <http://www.bnl.gov/ewms/ser/>. A summary of the report is also available and is accompanied by a compact disk containing the full report. To obtain a copy of the report or summary, please write or call:

Brookhaven National Laboratory
Environmental Protection Division
Attention: SER Project Coordinator
Building 860
P.O. Box 5000
Upton, NY 11973-5000
(631) 344-3711

