

BALD EAGLE CHRISTMAS COUNT DATA

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The following chart and this article on the wintering status of the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) in New York State were written to raise questions, stimulate discussion and eventually clarify the status of the Bald Eagle in New York State. Christmas Count records 1965-1973 and correspondence with the compilers were the only research tools used.

No Bald Eagles were reported by any count area west of Conesus-Honeoye Lake. This is possibly due to the few count areas west of 77° 37'W and the uncommon status of the Bald Eagle even though much of their area is adjacent to the Great Lakes. Conesus-Hemlock-Honeoye Lake has had a regular wintering pair of Bald Eagles since 1964. This pair is the only one that has recently (1973) been proven to have nested in New York State, although data from its 1972 eggs did indicate high pesticide residues.

Syracuse and Montezuma both report the Bald Eagle as being most uncommon. Ben Burtt, Syracuse compiler, states the 1965 report is the "only report in 24 years." The author remembers being at Cornell (1961-63) and seeing an old eagle nest at Montezuma. Yet from 1965 to 1973 only one report comes from there during the Christmas Count period.

Further east and along the Hudson: Putnam County, Peekskill, Catskill-Coxsackie counts indicate the very uncommon nature of the bird. The bird reported in the Catskill-Coxsackie report apparently *was not* verified though a single reporting would be plausible.

Rockland County's report is both encouraging and discouraging. Their counts show two reports in the last nine years. Bob Deed, Rockland compiler, points out that between 1947 and 1962 Rockland had good Bald Eagle counts. In the years 1948, '50, and '58 seven Bald Eagles were reported, with an apparent high of 8 in 1952. They remained regular in low numbers through about 1960. On closing his letter, Bob Deed is encouraged by an apparent increase in migrant and summering populations.

Many would probably feel that Long Island should have a large wintering population with all its shoreline and open water, but this is not so. Paul Buckley reports only an occasional migrant or vagrant bird. LeRoy Wilcox reports seeing only "one in Eastern Long Island in the last 10 years where before I could see a few every year especially in the winter." Richard A. Sloss sums it up best when commenting on the Golden Eagle, "Golden Eagle is even more uncommon than the Bald Eagle if such is possible."

Monticello, the count area for the Sullivan County Audubon Society,

has been the most regular reporter of Bald Eagles in New York State. Reports for eight of the last 9 years list the Bald Eagle. Five of 8 show more than 2 birds. The 1972 count shows 8 birds and the yet unpublished 1974 report shows 11 birds. Is the regularity of the Sullivan Count due to low pesticide levels and the high degree of protection afforded to the reservoirs and lakes found in that county? If this is the case does this resource deserve continued protection or are wintering populations of any great concern? Does this population represent a shift of Rockland's population?

John Bull (personal correspondence), currently going to press with the New York State Bird Book, gives the following high winter densities in New York: "25+ Cornwall, Orange County winter 1878 (E. A. Mearns), seen together; 18 Croton Point, Westchester County, Feb 11, 1951 (H. Darrow)." On January 14, 1973 twenty-one Bald Eagles were seen by Arlene and Marty Borko at the Rio-Mongaup reservoir complex. On December 17, 1973 Jim and Mary Key reported from 21 to 24 Bald Eagles at the same complex. These are conservative figures. Orange and Rockland Utility employees indicate highs of 28.

During both winters 72-73 and 73-74 there was a die-off of the alewife (*Pomolobus pseudoharengus*). This undoubtedly caused the eagles to concentrate in large numbers. Personnel at the Department of Environmental Conservation feel that the alewife was probably introduced into these waters about 1964 by New Jersey fisherman. As the alewife is here to stay, it is probable that it does represent a staple in the diet of wintering eagles along with deer carrion, ducks and other fishes. The fact that the alewife is not responsible for the eagles regular presence is strengthened by the fact that four were reported from Rio-Mongaup complex on the 1952 count.

The Christmas Count data does generally support the contention that Sullivan County supports the greatest concentration of wintering Bald Eagles in New York State if not the entire inland Northeast. The only other count area reporting more than one eagle, Conesus-Hemlock-Honeoye Lake, has the only nesting pair in the state. Are there nesting birds in Sullivan County?

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	Conesus Hemlock Honeoye Lake	Montezuma	Syracuse	Monticello	Rockland Co.	Catskill Coxsackie	Peekskill
	42° 47' N 77° 37' W	43° 00' N 76° 44' W	43° 06' N 76° 05' W	41° 34' N 74° 38' W	41° 08' N 73° 58' W	42° 17' N 73° 53' W	41° 24' N 73° 51' W
1965	Jan 2, 1965 <u>2 B. E.</u> **						
1966	Jan 2, 1966 2 B. E.		Dec 26, 1965 1 B. E.	Jan 1, 1966 2 B. E.			
1967				Jan 1, 1967 2 B. E.	Dec 26, 1966 1 B. E.		Dec 31, 1966 <i>li B. E.</i>
1968				Dec 31, 1967 1 B. E.			
1969	Dec 22, 1968 2 B. E.			Jan 1, 1969 6 B.E.		Dec 29, 1968 (1 B. E.)	
1970	Dec 21, 1969 2 B. E.			Jan 1, 1970 4 B. E.			
1971	Jan 3, 1971 2 B. E.			Dec 26, 1970 1 B. E.			
1972	Dec 31, 1971 <i>la B. E.</i>			Jan 1, 1972 5a 3i 8 B. E.	Dec 18, 1971 <i>la B. E.</i>		
1973		Jan 1, 1973 <i>li B. E.</i>		Dec 30, 1972 <i>la 2 i</i> 3 B. E.			*(<i>la B. E.</i>)

* Seen during count period

** Underlining set in bold print on Christmas Count

	Putnam Co.	Brooklyn L. I.	Southern Nassau Co.	Captree L. I.	Central Suffolk Co.	Quoque to Watermill	Montauk L. I.
	41° 24' N 73° 48' W	40° 36' N 73° 56' W	40° 37' N 73° 36' W	40° 40' N 73° 16' W	40° 50' N 72° 47' W	40° 50' N 72° 27' W	41° 03' N 72° 00' W
1965							
1966		Dec 26, 1965 li B. E.			Dec 27, 1965 1 B. E.		
1967	Jan 2, 1967 /a B. E.				Dec 26, 1966 1 B. E.		
1968		(1 B.E.)					
1969		Dec 22, 1968 1 B. E.		2i B. E.	Dec 26, 1970 li B. E.		Dec 28, 1968 1 B. E.
1970							
1971			Jan 3, 1971 1 B. E.		Dec 26, 1970 li B. E.	Dec 23, 1970 1 B. E.	Jan 18, 1971 li B. E.
1972					Dec 27, 1971 la B. E.		Dec 18, 1971 li B. E.
1973							
1974							

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NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1974

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The annual waterfowl census was held 14-22 January. An aerial count was made by the New York Department of Environment Conservation during the same period. Both counts are given complete, but a comparison of those species with a thousand or more individuals is of interest. This comparison is as follows: