

*Table 1.*

**Total Number of Eagles Seen in Aerial Count \***

Year	Adults	Immature	Unknown	Total
1988	659	342	15	1016
1989	843	399	14	1256
1990	1014	440	85	1539
1991	1226	635	3	1864
1992	1441	573	11	2025

\* Between Jan. 1 and Jan. 15 1988-1992, entire length of Mississippi River; Illinois River from Starved Rock to Pere Marquette State Park. Survey done by Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board.

Dunstan also cautions that "winter counts of eagles do not really show breeding productivity, but rather indicate how important it is to protect winter habitat." Lauzon agreed, "These aerial counts do not really gauge how well the eagles are doing. What we really must consider is their nesting success."

**Nesting Success**

So far, signs in Illinois are promising. In 1973, Lauzon knew of one nest at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois. It was not successful until 1978. Then in 1983, a nest was discovered at the Savanna Army Depot in northwestern Illinois near Mississippi Palisades State Park. In 1986, another nest was discovered on private property in west-central Illinois and in 1987, there were two nests at Crab Orchard. From 1987 to 1992, there have been more nests every year, said Lauzon (Table 3).

In 1987, the IESPB counted four known nests which were also active with one successful nesting and two young fledged. In 1992, 11 of 17 known nests were active. Eight of those nests were successful with 16 young fledged. Although the number dipped slightly in 1989 due to strong

winds that blew down two nests, the number of nesting eagles in Illinois seems to be on an upward trend, said Lauzon.

The 1985 estimate of the breeding population of Bald Eagles in the United States was approximately 5,000 pairs; the number of breeding pairs in the lower 48 states increased about 6 percent between 1982 and 1985 (Havera and Kruse, 1988).

In general, the data look good for the Bald Eagle, but "it must be treated with caution," said Lauzon. And although the federal government has

recently considered changing the eagle's status from endangered to threatened, that does not mean scientists should stop counting eagles in winter or summer, said Lauzon. Before deciding whether to re-classify the species to threatened, the federal government is revising its goals which dealt only with numbers. New goals will include habitat provision and pesticide reduction.

In the last four to five years, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin exceeded their numeric goals for nesting, said Lauzon. But that may not tell the whole story. In pockets of nesting sites close to the Lake Superior shore, the productivity of eagles has declined. Several studies in the Great Lakes region have reported that eagles nesting along the shoreline have lower reproductive success than those nesting further inland (Miller and Pfanmuller, 1991). Contaminant levels from addled eggs collected close to the shoreline are also higher than levels in eggs collected inland (Miller and Pfanmuller 1991). Data show high levels of DDE and PCBs from eagles nesting within 5 miles of the Great Lakes, compared to inland sites (Michigan Department of Natural Resources report 1992, unpublished).

*Table 2.*

**Midwinter Bald Eagle Surveys - National Count\***

Year	Adult	Immature	Unknown	Total
1988	7391	4091	354	11,836
1989	7254	4089	267	11,610
1990	8152	4425	997	13,574
1991	5885	3041	202	9128
1992	9758	4955	1286	16340

\* As eagle numbers continue to increase, some states have dropped out of the counts in some years. In 1991/92, the state of Washington, which hosts a high number of wintering eagles, did not participate in the count.