Our Majestic National Bird

Our country has a special bird as its national symbol. The bald eagle is so powerful and so strong, and soars so high in the sky, that it is a symbol of freedom to many.

Types of eagles can be found on every continent except Antarctica. The bald eagle is one of two species found in North America. (The other is the golden eagle.) The bald eagle is found only in North America.

An emblem of freedom

The bald eagle was selected in 1782 to be placed on the design of the Great Seal approved by Congress in 1782. The Great Seal is the official stamp, or mark, of the United States.

You can find the great seal and eagles on several of our coins and bills, including the quarter.

Great hunters

Bald eagles are raptors. Raptors are birds of prey. This means that they prey upon, or hunt, other animals.

Raptors also:
- Grab their prey with their powerful feet and carry it away.
- Have very good eyesight.
- Have hooked beaks.

Other raptors include owls, ospreys, hawks, vultures and falcons.

These birds are important to the balance of nature. They control the population of rodents and other prey species. Since raptors eat dead animals, they help clean up the environment.

Eagle facts

An eagle’s eyesight is possibly as much as eight times sharper than that of a human with perfect vision. From about 1,000 feet high, an eagle might spot prey over a three-mile area.

Bald eagles have as many as 2000 feathers. They molt, or gradually lose and grow new feathers, once a year. When they lose one feather on one wing, they lose a matching one on the other. In this way, they don’t lose their balance.

Their feathers are used for:
- Insulation in all kinds of weather.
- Protecting the skin.
- Camouflage to make the bird harder to see.

A bald eagle could lift only half their weight into the air. They don’t weigh much — about 10 to 15 pounds — so they can’t lift much.

Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

SYMBOL.
STAMP, STRONG, SACRED, SEAL, SPECIES, POWERFUL, PREY, MOLT, NATIONAL, EYESIGHT, FEATHERS, COUNTRY, EAGLE, EAGLE FACTS.

Based on materials originally produced and/or created by Betty Debnam.

A recovering species

Eagles were once on the endangered species list, but conservation efforts helped them recover. They are threatened by:
- Being hit by cars, trains and planes.
- Running into power lines.
- Poisoning and pesticides.
- Being shot.
- Drowning.
- Insecticides

Raptors may also include owls, ospreys, hawks, vultures and falcons.

Many raptors also:
- Eat dead animals.
- Help clean up the environment.
- Control the population of other animals.
- A sacred bird

Some Native American peoples regard the bald eagle as sacred. For example, Navajo people believe an eagle’s feather is healing and protective. Lakota people might present an eagle feather as a symbol of honor. Some believe that the eagle is a messenger between gods and humans.

On the Web:
- birdy.MP/PrayEagle
- The “Bald Eagle” by Scholastic Press

At the library:
- “Bald Eagles” by Scholastic Press
- “The Bald Eagle” by Norman Pearl

Mini Jokes

Ellen: What bird needs to wear a wig?
Evans: A bald eagle!

Eco Note

Wildlife experts say they have documented a “remarkable” trans-Atlantic voyage by a female osprey that was born in Scotland and then “flew” 4,124 miles to Barbados. “It is highly unlikely that even an osprey could have completed this in a single flight, even with strong tailwinds,” said Tim MacTear of the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation.

“For it is probable that she took the opportunity to rest on boats, which may themselves have been traveling to the Caribbean from the U.K.,” he added.

For later:

Look in your newspaper for other symbols of the United States.

Teachers: Follow and interact with The Mini Page on Facebook!