

Bald Eagle

Range: Continental United States

Endangered species listing: 1967

Federal recovery plans: 1986

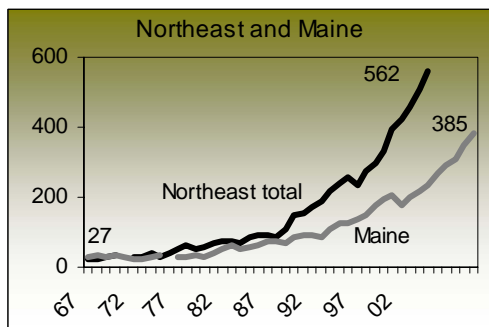
Downlisted to “threatened”: 1995

Proposed for delisting: 1998, 2006

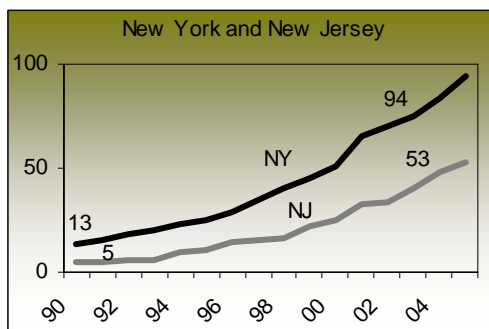
Status since listing: Increased



The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) first declined in the 1800s due to trophy hunting, feather collecting, and wanton killing. By the late 1940s, the use of DDT and other organochlorine compounds became increasingly widespread, causing eggshells to thin and lowering reproductive success. Eagle numbers plummeted, and in 1967 the species was listed as endangered in the Lower 48 states. It was joined by the American peregrine falcon, Arctic peregrine falcon and brown pelican in 1970. The plight of these large birds led to a ban on the use of DDT in the U.S. in 1972. Combined with habitat protection measures and a breeding, relocation, and reintroduction program, bald eagle numbers in the Lower 48 have soared from 416 in 1963 to 7,678 in 2003.



Northeast Highlight: Nesting pairs increased in the Northeast from 21 in 1967 to 562 in 2005. Maine contributed most of growth, increasing from 27 to 385. Between 1990 and 2005, New York pairs grew from 13 to 94 and New Jersey pairs grew from 5 to 53. After an absence of almost 80 years, eagles were reintroduced to Massachusetts in 1982, and grew to 19 pairs in 1982, and grew to eight in 2004. Due to the growth in neighboring states, eagles made their own way back to Vermont and Rhode Island.



The Northeast also provides essential wintering habitat for bald eagles. The Connecticut wintering population increased from 20 to 92 between 1979 and 2005, and the New York population increasing from 6 to 194 between 1978 and 2006.