



GOLDEN EAGLE

FALCONIIFORMES
Family: Accipitridae
Genus: *Aquila*
Species: *chrysaetos*



Range: Golden eagles have a Holarctic distribution. In North America, golden eagles are found in the western half of the continent, from Alaska to central Mexico, with small numbers in eastern Canada and scattered pairs in the eastern United States.

Habitat: Open, deserted terrain to grasslands from sea-level

Niche: Diurnal, arboreal, carnivorous

Wild diet: Medium sized mammals, rodents, rabbits, some birds & reptiles and carrion in winter

Zoo diet: Rats, herring, mice, rabbits (skinned and gutted)

Life Span: (Wild) up to 30 years
 (Captivity) record of 46 years

Sexual dimorphism: Females are larger

Location in SF Zoo: Animal Resource Center

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Adults are brownish with yellowish-brown plumage on top of head extending down the nape. Legs are feathers to the tips of the toes. Bill is horn colored with a black tip and tail has 2 white bands. Feet are yellow with black talons. Immature golden eagles are darker brown overall with white at the base of the tail and primary flight feathers (While in the bald eagle it is the wing covets that are white). The Golden Eagles does not have as many transitional phases as the Bald Eagle with the sub-adult phase occurring during the 2nd and 3rd year and initial adult plumage in the 4th.

Weight: M - 7-10 lbs
 F - 10-14.7 lbs

Length: 27 - 32 inches

Wing span: 6 - 7.5 feet

STATUS & CONSERVATION

These birds have been federally protected since 1962 in the US though regional populations may be affected by local issues. 1 - Subjected to gun shots by those using them of target practice or predator ignorance. 2 - Populations may be under pressure by egg collectors. Today's NA population is estimated at c. 70,000 individuals.

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COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

These birds are rarely heard, though what calls they do make range from soft mewling or yelping notes to a high squeal.

A pair of eagles may often hunt together with one chasing the prey to exhaustion while the other swoops in for the kill. One bird can carry up to 8 lbs in flight. In flight, the wings are held straight out, rather than at an angle as in some hawks and vultures. Slow, powerful wingbeats alternate with gliding and soaring.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Pairs are monogamous yet they only lay eggs every second year. Nuptial displays can occur during any month of the year. The most usual display is an undulating flight where a series dives and upward swoops ending with a few wing beats at the top of each swoop. Another display is where the male dives toward the female and she rolls on her back and presents her talons. A breeding pair requires about 35 square miles of hunting territory. These birds build several nests on rocky ledges or in trees that may be used over several seasons. In 80% of cases when 2 eggs are hatched the older eaglet will kill the younger one. It has been estimated that only 10% of wild-born chicks will survive past five years.

Incubation:	43 - 45 days	Sexual Maturity:	4
# of eggs:	2	Fledging:	65 - 70 days

MISCELLANEOUS

There are six subspecies of Golden Eagle that differ slightly in size and plumage. They can be found in different parts of the world:

- *A. c. chrysaetos*: Eurasia except Iberian Peninsula, east to western Siberia.
- *A. c. canadensis*: North America.
- *A. c. homeryi*: Iberian Peninsula and North Africa, east to Turkey and Iran.
- *A. c. japonica*: Japan and Korea.
- *A. c. daphanea*: From southern Kazakhstan east to Manchuria and south-west China including northern India and Pakistan.
- *A. c. kamtschatica*: Eastern Siberia, from the Altay to the Kamchatka Peninsula.

Sources: created 1/98, updated 5/7

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