Bald Eagle

Pygargue à tête blanche | *Haliaeetus leucocephalus (Linnaeus, 1766)*



SALMON-RUN SENTINEL

Watcher of the *salmon river*

Perched above a misty salmon stream, an adult Bald Eagle watches the current with pale, focused eyes. In autumn and winter, these powerful raptors gather along British Columbia rivers where spawning salmon feed entire streamside food webs.

SEASONAL RHYTHM

Coastal pairs repair nests in January and February, lay eggs from late February to April, and raise young through early summer. Autumn and winter gatherings peak from October to January when salmon runs are strongest.

RIVER AND SHORE

In British Columbia, Bald Eagles nest near salmon rivers, estuaries, lakes, and sheltered coasts. They favour tall Douglas-fir, Sitka spruce, western redcedar, or black cottonwood trees close to dependable feeding grounds.

STEWARDSHIP

In BC, Bald Eagles are secure overall, but the birds, their eggs, and their nests are protected year-round under Section 34 of the *Wildlife Act*. Give nest trees and winter feeding sites plenty of space.

FIELD NOTES

RECOGNIZE IT

Adults show a dark brown body, pure white head and tail, a heavy yellow hooked bill, and bare yellow legs. In flight, they soar on broad, flat wings with fingered tips.

SALMON LINK

Spawned-out salmon are a vital autumn and winter food source. Eagles often drag carcass pieces onto gravel bars and into nearby trees, helping move marine nutrients into streamside forests.

OBSERVE RESPECTFULLY

Watch quietly from a distance, especially near nest trees or communal winter roosts. Repeated disturbance can force eagles to waste energy or abandon important feeding and resting areas.

Sources: BC CDC, BC Ministry of Environment, BC Parks, ITIS, Buehler (2020)

Illustration: BC Watercolour Art | Learn more: BCWatercolourArt.com