

GOLDEN EAGLE
(AQUILA CHRYSAETOS)

Navajo/Federal Statuses: NESL G3 / BGEPA; MBTA; not listed under the ESA.

Distribution: Breeding range extends throughout Canada and western U.S. from SD south to western TX and northern Mexico, and west to the Pacific Coast. Nesting occurs at nearly all elevations across the Navajo Nation, and on nearly all types of cliff substrates including sandstone, limestone, and those of volcanic origin.

Habitat: Nest on steep cliffs, typically ≥ 30 m in height, although shorter cliffs (≥ 10 m) infrequently used. Nesting cliffs are normally directly adjacent to foraging habitat of desert grasslands or desert scrub, with only sparse shrubs if present, that provides primary prey of cottontail and jackrabbits. Nests usually placed in middle to upper parts of cliffs in sheltered ledges, potholes, or small caves which provide protection from the elements.

Similar Species: Immature Bald Eagle resembles immature Golden, but Golden has white restricted to base of tail and primary feathers; Turkey Vulture has unfeathered head, and has dark body feathers and gray primaries in flight.

Phenology:

- e.JAN-l.FEB: occupancy of nesting site, nest building, mating
- m.FEB-e.APR: egg-laying period, incubation period (41-45 days)
- e.APR-l.JUN: nestling period (60-75 days)
- l.MAY-e.JUL: fledging of young
- l.MAY-l.AUG: post-fledging period (60-70 days)
- \geq l.JUL: dispersal of young from nesting area

Survey Method: Pedestrian or aerial survey with high-power optics for nest sites or breeding adults from 1 MAR-15 JUN. Habitat evaluation may be done year-round, but any large stick nests should be re-surveyed during nesting season.

Avoidance: Use '[Golden and Bald Eagle Nest Protection Policy](#)': for active nests during 15 JAN-15 JUL, no brief activity within 600 m, no light activity within 800 m, no heavy activity within 1 km, and no loud activity within 1.2 km; no infrequent-use permanent structures within 800 m, and no daily-use permanent structures with 1 km of any nest, year-round.

References:

- Johnsgard, P.A. 1990. Golden Eagle. Pp.260-268, *In* Hawks, Eagles & Falcons of North America. Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Kochert, M.N., K. Steenhof, C.L. McIntyre & E.H. Craig. 2002. Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). *In* The Birds of North America, No.684 (A.Poole and F.Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA. (description p.2)
- Navajo Nation Dept. of Fish & Wildlife. 2008. [Golden and Bald Eagle Nest Protection Policy](#). Unpub.
- Watson, J. 1997. The Golden Eagle. T&AD Poyser Ltd.London.