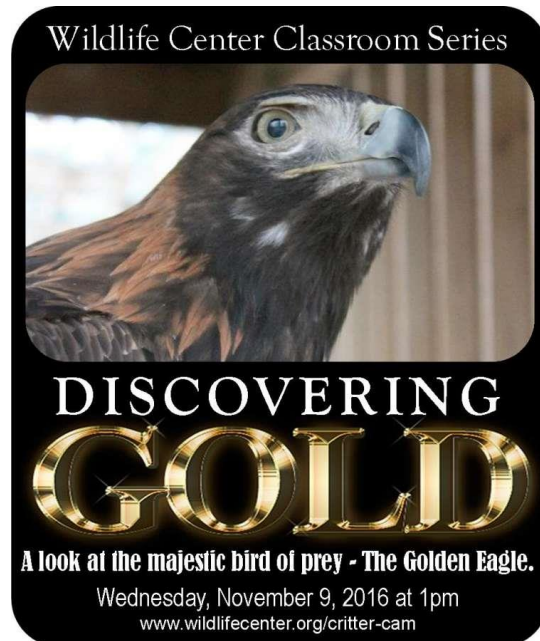




Wildlife Center Classroom Series

Discovering Gold: A Look at the Majestic Bird of Prey – the Golden Eagle

Wednesday November 9, 2016



Congowings:

The Welcome to the Wildlife Center of Virginia's Classroom series. Thank you for joining us today.

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

Is the Golden Eagle patient now wearing a transmitter, and will the injured cub from Richmond be coming to WCV?



Congowings: I am not sure if the Golden Eagle has been fitted yet with a transmitter. The staff are still observing this eagle's flight, Brenda. Your other question - will have to ask Amanda.

Comment From Carol in WMD

Afternoon...Ms. Congo and CN.



Congowings:

Many viewers enjoyed watching the Golden Eagle patient (#16-1934) on Critter Cam 3. While eagles species are similar, each have their own unique characteristics. Since it is rare for the Center to have a Golden Eagle patient I thought it would be interesting to talk about this majestic bird for this session.

Comment From CK in Pa

I'm here & ready for class. I haven't been here much in the last few months, but so glad to join in today!

Comment From Dawn in VB

Yes, Congo and feathers!

Comment From Dave in Missouri

Is it possible to put the Golden Eagle back on cam?

**Congowings:**

I'm not sure if the enclosure the Golden Eagle was moved to has a camera in it right now, Dave.

Comment From Dave in Missouri

Yes, the Golden eagle is so beautiful!



Golden Eagle Patient #16-1934. Photo property of Katie Tredinnick © 2016

**Congowings:**

The scientific name for the Golden Eagle is *Aquila chrysaetos* - *Aquila* meaning eagle and *chrysaetos* is from the Greek words - *khrysos* (golden) and *aetos* (eagle). There are four major groups of eagles which scientists recognize: Fish Eagles, Booted Eagles, Snake Eagles and Harpy Eagles. The Golden Eagle (GOEA) is a member of the "Booted" or "True Eagles" family.

**Congowings:**

Now for some words that I know everyone will have a hard time pronouncing - myself included . . .

**Congowings:**

There are 6 subspecies of Golden Eagles - differing in size and plumage.

Aquila chrysaetos chrysaetos (located in Eurasia)

Aquila chrysaetos Canadensis (located in North America)

Aquila chrysaetos homeryi (located in the Iberian peninsula and North Africa)

Aquila chrysaetos japonica (located in Japan and Korea)

Aquila chrysaetos daphanea (located in Southern Kazakhstan, South West China, Northern India and Pakistan)

Aquila chrysietos kamtschatica (located in Eastern Siberia)

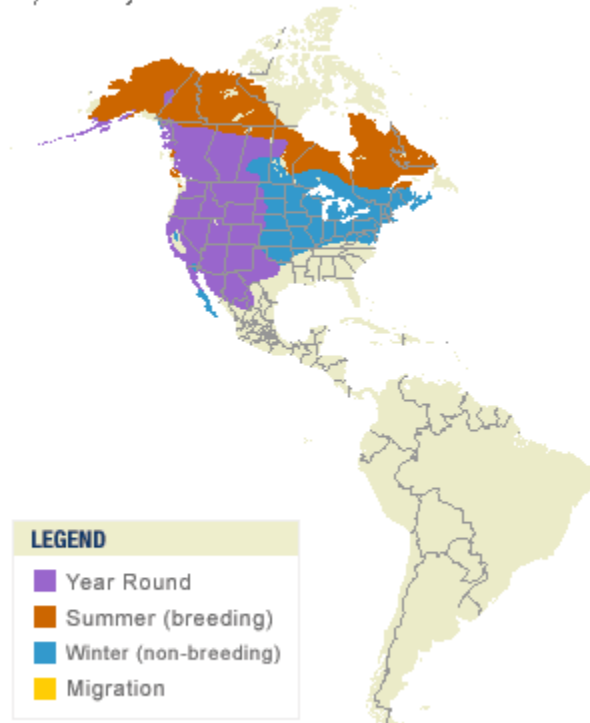
**Congowings:**

Depending on country, the Golden Eagle is also referred to as: Black Eagle, War Eagle, Royal Eagle, bird of Jupiter, king of birds and American War bird. They are the most common official national animal in the world. Albania, Austria, Germany, Kazakhstan and Mexico all have emblems with the Golden Eagle included. The Golden Eagle is the national bird of Mexico.

**Congowings:**

Unlike the Bald Eagle found only in North America, the Golden Eagle's range is broad. They can be found in North America (including Alaska), Europe, Russia and parts of Africa and Asia. They are seen mostly in the western part of the United States, but also appear in the east. In Britain they are predominantly found in the Scottish Highlands.

Golden Eagle
Aquila chrysaetos



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Range data by NatureServe

Graphic credit: Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

**Congowings:**

The locations vary as far as elevation - from sea level to several thousand feet in altitude. They are not usually found in heavily forested terrain. They prefer open areas such as deserts, mountains, and plateaus. These areas usually have cliffs or tall forests which alternate with the open spaces.

**Congowings:**

This next segment I find interesting . . .

**Congowings:**

The Golden Eagle has been a 'working' bird for many years. Hunting with eagles (and other raptors such as Northern Goshawks, Peregrine Falcons and Saker Falcons) is a traditional form of falconry. This practice is still used in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Bayan-Olgii, Mongolia and Xinjiang, China.

**Congowings:**

This ancient tradition dates back to the reign of Kublai Khan and was necessary for survival in the harsh, frigid winter months in these locations. For centuries 'eagle hunters' called burkitshi provided food for their people by hunting with raptors in barren, mountainous areas. Thousands of birds and falconers would go hunting for mammals, wolves and other prey during his reign.

**Congowings:**

The eaglets are captured from their nests and trained by families of hunters - children begin their training at the age of 13. Only female birds were selected since they were larger. The bond between the bird and the trainer is very strong. Tradition calls for hunters to set birds free after about a decade. The bond is so strong between trainer and bird that many times the trainer will have to hide or wait until dark to release the bird in order for the bird to not follow them back to the home. Since Golden Eagles can live as long as 30 years - this means they might live out another 20 years in the wild.

**Congowings:**

As years have passed, the burkitshi are a dying breed. There is only an estimated fifty or sixty "true" eagle hunters left - if that.



Photo credit DailyMail.com: Training: Talgarbek Shajbyrov releases his golden eagle during an exercise in Bokonbaevo, Kyrgyzstan, with one of his sons watching in fascination.

**Congowings:**

Between 1946 and 1973, the eastern Golden Eagle population is thought to have been affected by organochlorine pesticides, reducing breeding success and consequently pair abundance (Spofford 1971, Todd 1989, Bednarz et al. 1990, Kirk 1996).

**Congowings:**

In 2014 the US Fish and Wildlife Service conducted research for a status report - "Population demographics and estimation of sustainable take in the United States, 2016 update" - Golden Eagle and Bald Eagle populations.

**Congowings:**

Source US Fish & Wildlife Service: We estimated population size for the golden eagle by first estimating a population size for the western coterminous U.S. using a composite model that integrated multi-year information from a late summer aerial transect survey over the interior western U.S. with information from the BBS. Population size for Alaska could not be estimated directly. Instead, we used results from mid-winter aerial transect surveys in 2014 and 2015 over the same area as the interior western U.S. summer transect survey to estimate the increase in population size between late summer and winter. The increase was used as a coarse estimate of the size of the overwintering migrant population. We allocated 24% of the winter increase to Alaska as a conservative population estimate, assuming migrants originated proportionately across western Canada and Alaska.

**Congowings:**

Combining the western coterminous U.S., Alaska, and eastern U.S. estimates, total population size for the golden eagle in the U.S. (including Alaska) was approximately 39,000 in 2009 and 40,000 in 2014.

**Congowings:**

In the early 2000s, only four pairs were known in the eastern U.S., two in Maine, and one each in Tennessee and northwestern Georgia (Kochert et al. 2002). Kirk (1996) estimated that the eastern Canadian population reached only 200-300 pairs, most of which were probably breeding in Québec and Labrador. More recently, there is evidence suggesting that the eastern Golden Eagle population is recovering - from fall bird counts recorded at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and other eastern count sites.



Congowings:

One of densest nesting populations in North America is found in Denali National Park in Alaska (McIntyre et al. 2008) For more information:

<https://www.nps.gov/dena/in...>



Congowings:

Worldwide it is estimated that there are over 50,000 Golden Eagle pairs.



Congowings:

That is "pairs", not individuals.



Congowings:

The average life expectancy of a Golden Eagle in the wild is 15-20 years - longer in captivity. The oldest known wild golden eagle was a bird banded in Sweden which was recovered 32 years later.



Congowings:

Humans are the Golden Eagle's greatest threat. 70% of recorded GOEA deaths are attributed to human impact (either intentional or inadvertent) - electrocution, collisions with vehicles, power line, wind turbines and other structures. Human disturbance around nests can also lead to nest abandonment. Since the early 1970s, utility companies have modified poles to prevent eagle electrocutions. And some new power lines in nonurban areas have been built to "raptor-safe" construction standards.



Congowings:

Some sheep ranchers trapped, shot, or poisoned the birds into the 1980s. Some eagles have died after eating poisoned prey animals set out to control coyotes. Others succumb to lead poisoning from ammunition in hunter-shot prey.



Congowings:

Does anyone know if the Golden Eagle was affected by DDT?

Comment From Sharon in Fl

I will guess yes.

Comment From Dave in Missouri

I would think so?

Comment From Melinda in NC

AS much as the Bald Eagles were, I would the Golden Eagles would be too

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

Yes, it was.



Congowings:

I would have thought that too. Interestingly enough - Golden Eagles have escaped the harm sustained by fish-eating or bird-eating raptors from DDT and related chemicals due to the fact the prey they favor don't usually ingest pesticides. When these pesticides affected the eggshells of many birds of prey, Golden Eagles' shells retained normal thickness. Pesticide concentrations in their blood stayed below levels known to cause reproductive problems.

Comment From Sharon in Fl

Very interesting.

Comment From Dave in Missouri

Interesting!

Comment From Melinda in NC

Interesting.... It's all in what you eat!



Congowings:

As with the Bald Eagle - mortality rate is also high in Golden Eagles.



Congowings:

It is thought that 75% of young birds die before reaching maturity.

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

This is from Stanford: "Shell-thinning resulted in the decimation of the Brown Pelican populations in much of North America and the extermination the Peregrine Falcon in the eastern United States and southeastern Canada. Shell-thinning caused lesser declines in populations of Golden and Bald Eagles and White Pelicans, among others. Similar declines took place in the British Isles. Fortunately, the cause of the breeding failures was identified in time, and the use of DDT was banned almost totally in the United States in 1972."



Congowings:

Thank you Brenda. Interesting information.

Comment From Dave in Missouri

Higher for Golden Eagles?



Congowings:

According to research, yes.

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

You're welcome.

Comment From Guest

Late to class but I scrolled back and caught up. Whew. Interesting stuff!



Congowings:

Glad you made it Guest.



Congowings:

In 1962, the U.S. Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act outlawed harming these birds, their eggs, and their nests. The Golden Eagle is not on the US Fish and Wildlife's Endangered or Threatened Species List, but is protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald Eagle Act.

Comment From BarbG

slippinng into a back seat also-read back



Congowings:

Possessing a feather or other body part is a felony with a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or 10 years in prison. Eagle feathers are made available to federally recognized Native American tribal members every year from the Fish and Wildlife Service's National Eagle Repository.

Comment From CarolinaGirl

Darn My computer forgot who I am! I was guest.



Congowings:

Golden Eagles are found mostly in the western part of the United States - favoring open or semi-open country near mountains and cliffs. Their habitat ranges from the arctic to the desert. They usually avoid developed areas and uninterrupted stretches of forest.

**Congowings:**

Golden Eagles are one of the largest birds in North America with a wingspan of approximately 75-89 inches. Males are smaller than the females by about 35%. Depending on gender and location they weigh on average between 7-15 pounds. Their length averages between 27 -36 inches. Their size and weight is very similar to the Bald Eagle.



The sun hits the head of Golden Eagle #16-1934 - showing the golden plumage on the base and back of the head. Screen capture property of WCV.

**Congowings:**

Adult Golden Eagles are a dark brown with a golden sheen on the back of the head and neck - which is what gave the species its name. Adult Golden Eagles are brown overall, with no large areas of white. Most flight feathers of both wing and tail exhibit a diagnostic pattern called "marbling," characterized by curved or irregular pale patches, spots, and bars. These marbling markings contrast with the predominant chocolate-brown color of adult Golden Eagle feathers, and vary from light brown to tan to (rarely) almost white.

**Congowings:**

It takes four years to acquire adult plumage. Juvenile golden eagles have white patches at the base of the primaries; the tail is white with a distinct dark terminal band. Adult Golden Eagles have hazel to dark golden eyes. Some are more brown in color. Their beak is a bluish slate-black.

Comment From Dave in Missouri

Wow, cool video, such a beautiful eagle!

Comment From Melinda in NC

Beautiful bird!

**Congowings:**

One of the differences between the Golden Eagle and the Bald Eagles are their legs. The Golden Eagle has feathered legs (tarsi), while the Bald Eagle doesn't. The feathers continue down the leg to the foot. This is one way to distinguish a Golden Eagle from an immature Bald Eagle. The Rough-legged Hawk, the Ferruginous Hawk, and the Golden Eagle are the only American raptors to have legs feathered all the way to the toes.



Golden Eagle #16-1934 - showing the feathers on the legs and the large terminal band on the tail. Screen capture property of WCV.

great video



Congowings:

<https://www.fws.gov/lab/idn...>

Awesome picture CW!



Congowings:

Congowings:



Congowings:

Congowings:

Saw that live the other day!:)

Very resourceful birds.



Congowings:

Golden Eagles have also been observed killing larger prey such as mountain goats, coyotes, badgers and bobcat. There are videos of Golden Eagles pulling mountain goats off cliffs. I'm going to post this video as a link in case some don't want to view it. It might be too graphic for some to watch.

Golden eagle vs Mountain Goats 1:37

<https://youtu.be/pjYJo9UnOeY>

Comment From BarbG

interesting



Congowings:

Tortoises are not safe either from a hungry Golden Eagle. The eagle will pick the tortoise up in its talons and fly high in the sky and then drop it on the rocky terrain below. The shell breaks exposing the meat to the eagle.



Congowings:

Single birds and pairs have been seen engaging in aerial play with objects such as sticks or dead prey, carrying these items high into the sky, then dropping and retrieving them. In addition to attacking prey from the air, Golden Eagles sometimes hunt on the ground, wildly flapping as they run.



Congowings:

How large a territory do you all think a Golden Eagle maintains?

Comment From BarbG

5 miles

Comment From Dave in Missouri

50 miles?

Comment From David in VA

20 sq miles

Comment From Sharon in Fl

30 miles

Comment From CarolinaGirl

10 miles



Congowings:

Good answers and a few of you are correct.



Congowings:

Golden Eagles have larger territories than Bald Eagles. The immediate area might be 3-5 miles, but because their main diet is mammals they need to hunt farther. Territories usually range from 35-60 square miles. These numbers vary greatly between different research projects.



Congowings:

Their immediate territory has several night-time roosts and a couple of loafing areas to perch. They might have 2-3 alternate nest sites in their territory too. The nest sites are called eyries and are usually located on cliffs.

**Congowings:**

The eagles are often seen protecting their territory from other eagles in undulating flight or "sky dancing" - a rapid series of steep dives and upward swoops. At the top of their climb they will beat their wings a couple of times before heading back down.

**Congowings:**

In an undulating territorial and courtship display known as "sky-dancing," a Golden Eagle performs a rapid series of up to 20 steep dives and upward swoops, beating its wings three or four times at the top of each rise. In "pendulum flight," the eagle dives and rises, then turns over to retrace its path.

**Congowings:**

Golden eagles are able to breed between 3-4 years of age. Like the Bald Eagle they usually mate for life.

**Congowings:**

Now for the "cute" factor . . .



Golden Eaglet in nest.

Comment From Dave in Missouri

Cool!

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

Very cute!

Comment From Sharon in Fl

Too cute

**Congowings:**

Golden Eagles usually build their nests (eyries) on cliff ledges or in large trees - commanding a wide view of their surroundings. They rarely build their nests on the ground, but have been known to build nests in man-made structures such as nesting platforms, towers, and even windmills . Nests can be used for many years, but the pair might alternate between a couple of nests in their territory. Both male and female take part in the nest construction.

Comment From CK in Pa

Aww, so cute!

**Congowings:**

The nests consist of sticks, twigs, grasses, leaves, moss and outside of the US they also use heather, woodrush and other green foliage. It isn't unusual to see bones or antlers as nest material. New material is added each year and the size of their nests are similar to the Bald Eagle - five to six feet in diameter. The nests built on cliffs are usually between 2-3 feet deep. The largest known Golden Eagle nest in Britain was discovered in Scotland in 1954. It was 15 foot deep and had been used for 45 years.



Congowings:

This link shows cliff and tree nests used by the Golden Eagle:

<https://www.utahbirds.org/b...>



Congowings:

Depending on location, the female generally lays 1-3 eggs 3-4 days apart in March (usually 2). It is not unusual for only one to survive to fledge. The eggs are whitish to cream with brown blotches and are 2.7-3.4 inches in length and 1-9-2.5 inches in width.



Golden Eagle's egg and newly hatched chick.

Comment From BarbG

adorable

Comment From Dave in Missouri

Wow, looks like they would fall off of the cliff!



Congowings:

Both adults incubate, but the majority of the incubation is by the female - over 80%. The male brings food to the female while she is incubating.



Congowings:

Incubation begins as soon as the first egg is laid and the eaglets hatch a few days apart. Incubation is 41-45 days. As with the Bald Eagle the first chick to hatch is dominant and the second hatch has a 20% survival rate during the first few weeks. Both parents share the responsibilities of raising the young.



Congowings:

The female does most of the brooding and feeding of the young, while the male provides the female and the young with all the food, especially in the early stages. She broods the chicks almost continuously for the first two weeks. After this, she will regularly leave the nest and share the hunting with the male.



Golden Eaglets in nest. Photo credit National Geographic / Igor Shpillenok.

Comment From Sharon in FL

Why such a low survival rate during the first few weeks?



Congowings:

Sibling rivalry, Sharon in FL. It seems to be more prevalent in the Golden Eagle species.

Comment From Dave in Missouri

Awe!

Comment From PaulaR

Congowings, that video of the Golden Eagle attacking the mountain goat was pretty amazing...but it looked like the Eagle probably was the worse for the wear at the end, having been rolled over on several times, smashed into rocks...and having the goat run off more or less alive at the end. I don't imagine they do this regularly...or they pick smaller animals that they'd have more success with.



Congowings:

Paula, if you google Golden Eagle and Mountain goats you will find a couple of videos showing them hunting goats. I chose that one as it seemed to be the least graphic.

Comment From PaulaR

Fatal beak bonking...so sad. I wonder if that's more prevalent with goldens because only one parent is hunting to feed them instead of two as in bald eagles?



Congowings:

If food is not abundant, then the oldest will make sure the youngest doesn't get much. I know you all have seen this in Bald Eagles nests - it is common. But with the Golden Eagle the survival rate for the second hatch is much lower. Maybe just the aggressiveness of the species.

Comment From Guest

sure the eagle didnt make it?



Congowings:

In the video? I believe the eagle did.

Comment From PaulaR

Congowings, I've always heard that those videos of eagles attacking wolves were photoshopped...but seeing that one go after a mountain goat makes me wonder if they might not actually be the real thing (unless the bird is shown carrying off a mountain goat or wolf, and then I'm pretty sure it



Congowings:

Some photos and videos are photoshopped or were edited. But they are large aggressive birds and have been known to take down larger prey.



Congowings:

I'm sure you all have seen the 'fake' video of a Golden Eagle attempting to grab a toddler from a park. That WAS NOT true. But many thought it was.

Comment From Dave in Missouri

Thank you **Congowings**, I will scroll back later, very awesome, cool class!!



Congowings:

Enjoy your afternoon Dave. ;-) Thanks for being here.



Congowings:

As with most other raptors, the chicks are quite vulnerable after hatching to extreme weather conditions. Newly hatched young are covered only with light, fluffy down and weigh approximately 3 oz. Like Bald Eaglets they are not able to thermoregulate for the first two weeks. The parents will brood them during that time to keep them warm.



Congowings:

The eaglets grow quickly and usually take their first flight (fledge) at approximately 60-70 days, but are still dependent on their parents for food for the next 90-100 days. By October the adults usually drive their offspring from their territory.

Comment From Dawn in VB

They definitely have different behaviors than Bald Eagles.



Congowings:

This link provides some good photos of age progression for Golden Eaglets. Click on the links at the top for more photos:

<https://www.utahbirds.org/b...>

Comment From BarbG

those are amazing pictures



Congowings:

How to age Golden Eagles:

<http://bit.ly/2fCWviW>



Congowings:

Golden Eagles possess astonishing speed and maneuverability for their size. Diving from great heights, they have been clocked at close to 100 miles per hour. Their average cruising speed is around 30 mph. In flight the Golden Eagle's wings are held in a shallow "V" with the outer primary feathers spread.



Congowings:

Here is another excellent video showing the Golden Eagle in slow motion by Earth Unplugged. Since it is longer I will share the link so you can view it later.

<https://youtu.be/aMOJMoGABgk>

**Congowings:**

Like Bald Eagles some golden eagles migrate, others do not. It depends on the conditions of their geographic location and the availability of food sources. Alaskan and Canadian eagles typically fly south in the fall, while birds that live in the western continental U.S. tend to remain in their ranges year-round.

**Congowings:**

The Golden Eagle is not a common patient at the Wildlife Center of Virginia, but a few Golden Eagles have been cared for at the Center over the years. Recently, viewers were able to view Golden Eagle patient #16-1934 on Critter Cam 3. Many of you already know this bird's story, but there might be a few viewers who aren't familiar with it.



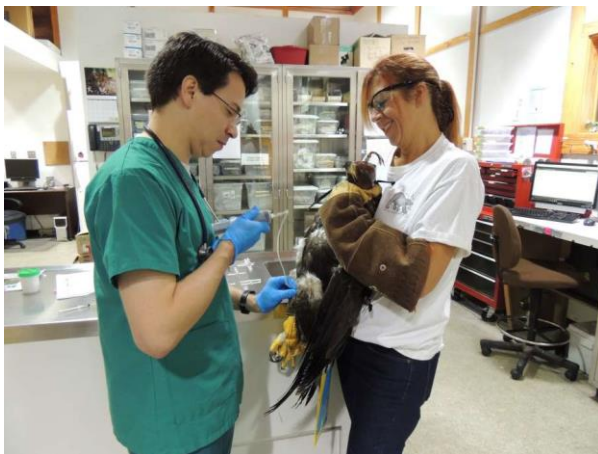
Golden Eagle Patient #16-1934. Photo property of WCV.

**Congowings:**

This eagle was found standing on a road in Saltville, Virginia on August 21, 2016. The eagle was initially taken to Southwest Virginia Veterinary Services, a non-wildlife veterinary facility near Lebanon. Although specific details of the initial rescue were unavailable, records state that the bird was unable to fly away when approached. The eagle was transported to the Wildlife Center the next day as a referral.

**Congowings:**

Dr. Ernesto Dominguez, one of the Center's veterinary interns, performed the initial exam which revealed the juvenile eagle was bright, alert, responsive, and able to stand. However, the bird was in poor overall physical condition and had mild inflammation in the rear portion of the left eye. The injury, possibly due to physical trauma, had caused partial vision impairment and was most likely the cause of the eagle's dehydration and poor body condition. Emergency blood analysis was performed revealing a low-level of oxygen-carrying red blood cells, another factor indicating fatigue and physical stress.



Golden Eagle Patient #16-1934 being examined by Dr. Ernesto Dominguez. Photo property of WCV.

**Congowings:**

Radiographs were taken the same day, and Dr. Ernesto did not find any bone fractures or skeletal abnormalities. Additional blood testing revealed low levels of lead.

**Congowings:**

The eagle's attitude, posture, appetite, and physical condition were monitored daily, and it was determined that the bird's injuries were not severe enough to immediately rule out the possibility of release. On August 26, it was transferred to outdoor enclosure A-1 for physical conditioning and additional monitoring. After additional observation, Drs. Dave and Peach concluded that this eagle is very young -- likely hatched just a few months ago.



Golden Eagle Patient #16-1934 in Flight Enclosure. Photo property of Katie Tredinnick © 2016.

**Congowings:**

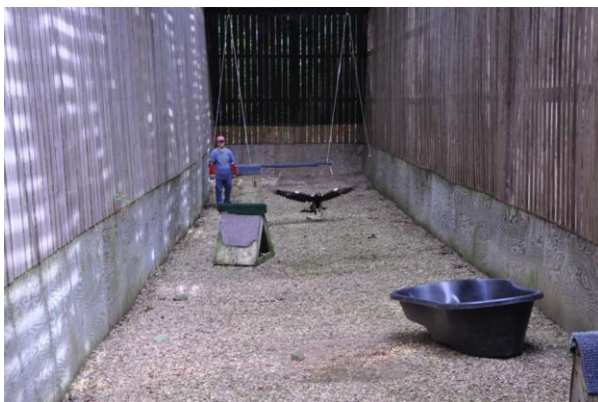
While Golden Eagle's live year-round in many western states, as mentioned before they are usually only seen on the east coast during winter months -- and even then, very rarely. However, from 1995 to 2006, approximately 50 young, captive-raised Golden Eagles were released throughout Tennessee, North Carolina, and northern Georgia in an attempt to establish a local breeding population. While the fate of many of these eagles is unknown, it is possible that some of them successfully reproduced.

**Congowings:**

Dr. Dave, the Wildlife Center's Director of Veterinary Services, suspects that this individual may be a direct descendant of those eagles. Based on the eagle's age, it's unlikely that it would have been able to fly any significant distance since hatching. Feathers from the eagle have been sent to Purdue University to analyze the DNA, which -- when compared to the genetics of western Golden Eagles -- may be able to definitively reveal this bird's heritage. Veterinary staff are still waiting for the results of the DNA analysis that will compare this bird's genetic patterns to both eastern and western Golden Eagles.

**Congowings:**

Patient #16-1934 was moved to Flight Enclosure A3 (the larger, higher flight enclosure), but it was challenging for the rehabilitation staff and externs to exercise; while the bird is capable of flying, it is often stubborn and refuses to fly after just a few passes. On November 8 the staff moved the Golden Eagle back into Flight Pen A1.



Golden Eagle Patient #16-1934 being exercised. Photo property of Katie Tredinnick © 2016.



Golden Eagle Patient #16-1934 being exercised. Photo property of Katie Tredinnick © 2016.



Congowings:

If the eagle continues to do well, the eagle is expected to be released soon. Dr. Dave McRuer will fit the bird with a GPS transmitter so that Center staff and other biologists can track the eagle post-release.

Comment From PaulaR

ah now you're getting to the mystery...where is the nest? no nesting pairs are know in that part of the state...Could this be an illegally captive bred bird?



Congowings:

Not sure, PaulaR. Might just be a first year bird that was nesting in the western part of the state.



Congowings:

I'd like to share with you all some previous Golden Eagle releases. Success stories never get old.



Congowings:

Golden Eagle Case History of Golden Eagle, #11-0017



Golden Eagle Patient #11-0017. Photo property of WCV.



Congowings:

On January 9, 2011 an adult Golden Eagle was found with its toe caught in a foothold trap in Craig County. The bird was rescued by Conservation Police Officer J.W. Koloda, taken to permitted wildlife rehabilitator Gwenn Johnston, and then admitted to the Wildlife Center on January 11. Center veterinarians found that the eagle's third toe on its right foot had an old, necrotic fracture that was down to the bone. The eagle's toe was amputated on January 21; this toe was not critical to the eagle's ability to hunt or perch.



Congowings:

The bird recovered well from surgery and spent several weeks in one of the Center's largest outdoor flight pens before being released on February 16, 2011 by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Wildlife Center of Virginia at Harvey's Knob Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway.



Congowings:

Prior to release, Jeff Cooper, eagle biologist for DGIF and Dave Kramer, a Virginia Tech researcher, measured and banded the Golden Eagle. They also fitted the bird with a GPS transmitter.



Golden Eagle Patient #11-0017 was released February 16, 2011. Jeff Cooper, eagle biologist for VDGIF fitted the eagle with a GPS transmitter before releasing the bird. Photo property of WCV.



Golden Eagle Patient #11-0017 was released February 16, 2011. Jeff Cooper, eagle biologist for VDGIF and Dave Kramer (VA Tech researcher) fitted the eagle with a GPS transmitter before releasing the bird. Photo property of WCV.



Congowings:

You can see the beautiful plumage coloring on the back of the head in this photo.



Golden Eagle Patient #11-0017 was released at Harvey's Knob Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Photo property of WCV.



Congowings:

And off to freedom - what beautiful scenery this eagle has to look down on.



Golden Eagle Patient #11-0017 was released at Harvey's Knob Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Photo property of WCV.



Congowings:

Although segments of the Golden Eagle population in the western United States have been extensively studied, relatively little is known about Golden Eagles east of the Mississippi. Increasing awareness of the significance of this population is one of the goals of the Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group, an international partnership founded in 2010 to address research gaps and to gather basic information about the distribution and ecology of this magnificent raptor. As a prominent and active member of the working group, VDGIF is engaging in Golden Eagle research in the mountains of Virginia.

Comment From Guest

so where is it at now?



Congowings:

Check the tracking link and see what information has been shared on this eagle Guest.

Comment From Lydia, PA ໒໒໑໑

Oh no, I missed the class on golden eagle! Now I must scroll back



Congowings:

Hello Lydia. There is a little more information to be shared. Glad you were able to make it.



Congowings:

The following photos show Golden Eagle patient #12-0095 being released on June 6, 2012 by Wildlife Center's Director of Veterinary Services Dr. Dave McRuer at the Devil's Knob overlook at Wintergreen Resort in Nelson County.



Golden Eagle patient #12-0095 was released by Dr. Dave McRuer at Devil's Knob overlook at the Wintergreen Resort in Nelson County.



Golden Eagle patient #12-0095 was released by Dr. Dave McRuer on June 6, 2012 at Devil's Knob overlook at the Wintergreen Resort in Nelson County. Photo property of WCV.



Golden Eagle patient #12-0095 was released by Dr. Dave McRuer on June 6, 2012 at Devil's Knob overlook at the Wintergreen Resort in Nelson County. Photo property of WCV.



Golden Eagle patient #12-0095 was released by Dr. Dave McRuer on June 6, 2012 at Devil's Knob overlook at the Wintergreen Resort in Nelson County. Photo property of WCV.



Golden Eagle patient #12-0095 was released by Dr. Dave McRuer on June 6, 2012 at Devil's Knob overlook at the Wintergreen Resort in Nelson County. Photo property of WCV.



Golden Eagle patient #12-0095 soaring over the mountain after release on June 6, 2012 at Devil's Knob overlook at the Wintergreen Resort in Nelson County. Photo property of WCV.



Congowings:

[Here is a short video of the release.](#)



Congowings:

[Listen to all of those shutters flying, lol.](#)

Comment From BarbG

another beautiful release

Comment From Dawn in VB

That is an awesome pic!

Comment From CK in Pa

Love raptor releases!

Comment From BarbG

"it never gets old"



Congowings:

[No, it doesn't. That was a picture perfect release. Beautiful eagle - beautiful scenery.](#)



Congowings:

[No talk about Golden Eagles would be complete without mentioning one Golden Eagle . . . any ideas?](#)

Comment From Lydia, PA ☺☺☺

Wonderful vid!

Comment From BarbG

Junior

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

Junior!

Comment From Sharon in Fl

Junior

Comment From Lois

Junior

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Junior!!

Comment From CK in Pa
Junior!



Congowings:

Wow - you all had the same answer! And you would be right!

Comment From PaulaR
Junior!



Congowings:

From 1983 - 2012, the Wildlife Center of Virginia was home to Ambassador Junior - a beautiful Golden Eagle. He passed away on November 5, 2012.



Golden Eagle Ambassador Junior - 1983-2012. Photo property of WCV.



Congowings:

Junior was taken from his nest in 1983 at an early age. At about age six months, he escaped his captors [or was released] and was found walking down a road in Merced, California, wearing jesses. His feathers were broken and shredded, suggesting that he had been kept in a wire cage. His feather condition left him unable to fly, and he was admitted to a wildlife rehabilitation facility for treatment, where it was determined that Junior had become imprinted on humans during his time in captivity. Junior came to the Wildlife Center in March 1985. Though his ability to fly had been restored, his imprinted status precluded his release into the wild.

Comment From BarbG
I remember Ed on the discussion talking about him

Comment From Lois

Still remember that day, was at WCV after the Gala, traveled home and found out he passed. :(

Comment From PaulaR

I know Ed had a very special bond with that bird...I think he was a family member.

**Congowings:**

For years, Wildlife Center President Ed Clark and Junior traveled throughout Virginia and beyond, to fulfill the Wildlife Center's mission -- teaching the world to care about and to care for wildlife and the environment. Ed states, "Saying goodbye to a friend and partner you've known and loved for nearly three decades is certainly not easy. Junior lived at home with me for the first 15 years we were together, before moving to his new home at the Center. He certainly aged better than I ... I am certainly going to miss him. There are so many memories that are welling up for me; so many adventures we shared, and so much history together.



WCV President Ed Clark and Golden Eagle Ambassador Junior. Photo property of WCV.

**Congowings:**

Goodbye my friend; you will never be forgotten."

**Congowings:**

A necropsy was performed on Ambassador Junior. According to the results that came back from an outside laboratory, Junior died of complications from advanced heart disease. His whole heart was likely not working as well as it had been when he was younger and there was evidence of fibrosis, which makes the heart stiff. According to Dr. Rich, Junior also had artherosclerosis, which is a thickening of the blood vessels. His heart likely fibrosed secondary to degenerative heart disease that is not unusual in old raptors. In fact, it is one of the most common causes of death in aged captive raptors.

Comment From CarolinaGirl

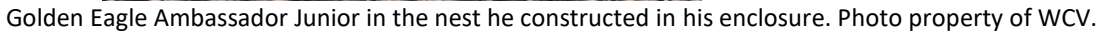
Junior loved his pile of sticks.

**Congowings:**

I'm glad you brought that up CarolinaGirl -

**Congowings:**

Jackie Sheets - a Team Volunteer at the Wildlife Center wrote a blog for the 2012 Year in Review. Here is an excerpt: "Junior, an educational Golden Eagle, was quite the vocal bird. He would constantly make his presence known when we were busy with outdoor rounds. I do believe Junior thought he was a human and he was constantly looking for the perfect mate. Trying to impress his potential mate, he would show off his amazing nesting skills, his ability to remodel, and he also showed that he was a mate that would help keep the house clean. Finding Junior a stick to give him to help with his nest building was always a goal for me at the end of rounds. Having Junior swoop down to take the stick was an added plus. But Junior really won my heart when he started bringing me sticks. What an amazing eagle! Junior will always have a special place in my heart!"



I remember seeing Juniors nest. Quite impressive!

I remember a GOE they released maybe 7 or so years ago who had a transmitter. It flew another over PA I remember over NY and into Canada. Then it stopped transmitting. I believe the though was for some reason the transmitter stop working. You may have already discussed this, I will scroll back and read all when class is over.



Congo, Where would I find the link for the golden transmitter? I guess I missed it.



good picture of feathers on his legs

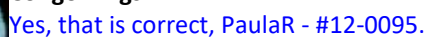


<http://wildlifecenter.org/b...>

Seems odd that Buddy has never shown an interest in a nest.



wasn't one of those eagles a victim of a netting misfire accident?



Comment From PaulaR

What a great nest builder! I think our Buddy has missed out on his father's amazing nest building skills (and his older (?) brother HK has been building some amazing nests too)

Comment From PaulaR

Thanks, Congowings!



Congowings:

You're welcome.



Congowings:

Ambassador Junior and Ed Clark made many appearances together over the years. One event took place at Pollak Vineyards -- an evening with Ed Clark and Junior the Golden Eagle. About 60 guests mingled at the vineyard and listened as Ed shared stories, experiences, and insights ... and his many years of working with Junior.



Congowings:

As I come to the close - I wanted to share an interesting 'older' story about a Golden Eagle.

Comment From gma Nancy western Pa

Lots of information Congo - thank you so much!



Congowings:

There are many unusual stories about animals - the Golden Eagle is no exception. You might enjoy this book, Gifts of an Eagle, by Kent Durden. It is the true story about the curious relationship between a Golden Eagle and a man named Ed Durden who received a grant from the Fish and Wildlife Department to capture a golden eaglet to film and study for educational purposes. Just as the Wildlife Center uses surrogates to raise young, "Lady" was also a surrogate - but to unlikely young.



Congowings:

There is also a film based on this 1972 best-selling book. Here is a link to an excerpt from the film "Gifts of an Eagle". In this clip, the Golden Eagle named "Lady" is shown raising baby geese or goslings - her natural prey! (by kddaisygrl):

<https://youtu.be/9oLMH1rfNLE>



Congowings:

She was also a surrogate to owlets and eaglets.



Congowings:

I hope you all enjoyed this session. And I hope I answered some questions that you might have had about the Golden Eagle.

Comment From Lydia, PA ☺🐦?

Oh I must check that link out after I read back...sounds fascinating to watch. Golden eagle raising goslings

Comment From Sharon in FL

I guess because Lady was being fed she did not feel the need to kill the goslings?



Congowings:

I think she was reacting on instinct - to care for young. It is an interesting book - of course it was a long time ago and things were a bit different back then.

Comment From David in VA

Thank you for a wonderful class session today Ms Congo. Quite informative as always.



Congowings:
[Glad you enjoyed it, David.](#)

Comment From Dawn in VB

Thank you so much Congo. This was a great class!



Congowings:
[Thank you Dawn!](#)

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

Wow, Lady certainly had a strong mothering instinct!

Comment From BarbG

wonderful class Congo-learned a lot

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

I learned a lot about Golden Eagles today. Thank you very much for a great class, **Congowings**. I enjoyed all the videos and photos too.

Comment From Mary E in NC

Thanks, Congo, for a great class! These are fascinating eagles - and you made it really interesting!

Comment From PaulaR

Thank you for a very interesting class, **Congowings**!

Comment From Lydia, PA ☺☺☺

Thank you Congo for doing this class and all the info. Now I need to read back and check all the links

Comment From Sharon in FL

Thank you Congo. That was a terrific class.