

Supplement to “Molting Sequence and Aging of Bald Eagles” ⁽¹⁾



Juvenal Plumage⁽¹⁾
½ Year

Basic I Plumage⁽¹⁾
1 ½ Years

Basic II Plumage⁽¹⁾
2 ½ Years

Basic III Plumage⁽¹⁾
3 ½ Years

Basic IV Plumage⁽¹⁾
4 ½ Years⁽²⁾

Definitive Plumage⁽¹⁾
5 ½+ Years⁽³⁾



69% of *Fledges*
Survive to End of
First Year⁽⁴⁾.
Non-breeding.

63% Survive to End
of Second Year⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾.
Non-breeding.

57% Survive to End
of Third Year⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾.
Very rare breeding.

52% Survive to End
of Fourth Year⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾.
Potentially breeding.

47% Survive to End
of Fifth Year⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾.
Many-breeding.

43% Survive to End
of Sixth Year⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾.
Many breeding.

Important note on plumage variation: All pre-definitive Bald Eagles follow a predictable sequence of plumages, but individual birds exhibit unique variations at each age. No two eagles of the same age appear identical, and examples shown here do not represent a 'typical' plumage for any given plumage class. See a wide variety of plumage presentations for each plumage class/age at EaglesExplored.com

(1) McCollough, Mark A. (1989), "Molting Sequence and Aging of Bald Eagles", The Wilson Bulletin (Vol. 101, No. 1). (2) Per reference 1, Bald Eagles aged 4 ½ years might display definitive plumage. (3) Per reference 1, Bald Eagles aged 5 ½ to 8 ½ years might retain dark flecks around the eyes and in the tail. (4) Zimmerman, et al. (2022) "Estimating allowable take for an increasing bald eagle population in the United States", The Journal of Wildlife Management (Vol. 86, Issue 2). (5) Mathematically calculated based on Reference 4; approximate average w/ 91% survival AY1.

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