

my sent to Bill Tate 1-6-71



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31 Dec 1970

Dear Bill:

Enclosed is a copy of my 1970 Am. Eagle nest survey report for the Chesapeake Bay region.

I expect to get going on the 1971 survey by mid February and, according to the F&W Service, may have to do with fewer flights than last year. If you could cover the eagle nests in and around the Blackwater Refuge - as per location data I sent you earlier - and report to me your observations at each during the season - it would help save us a flight or two for other areas.

A very happy, healthful and prosperous 1971 to you and yours -

Sincerely  
Jack Abbott

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1970 American Eagle Nest Survey of the Chesapeake Bay Region

by  
Jackson M. Abbott

The 1970 nesting season for the American Eagle in the Chesapeake Bay Region got off to a generally late start. A few pairs were incubating before the end of February but most did not lay until mid-March.

As for previous years since 1961, this survey was primarily accomplished by observations from small aircraft. Fred Scott of Richmond paid for a private plane to cover the Bay region of Virginia south of the Rappahanock River. Planes and pilots from the U. S. Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife flew me on five flights while an Army pilot and airplane flew me on three flights to cover the rest of the Bay region.

Bill Tate, Assistant Manager of the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, made some flights and valuable observations of several eagle nests at that refuge. Norm Holgerson, manager of the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge reported on the eagle nest at that refuge. For the first time since 1955 a young eagle was hatched at both of these refuges!

Others who assisted the survey by making ground observations at certain nests are: M. A. Byrd, C. W. Hacker, E. T. McKnight and Mrs. C. W. Wheelley. Bob Ellis of Vienna, Virginia, made numerous observations from the ground of the nest and two eaglets at Chantilly, Westmoreland County, Virginia. On one occasion, he saw an adult carrying a snake to the nest. This is the first recorded instance that I know of which indicates that snakes are included in the diet of the American Eagle (he was certain it was not an eel because it had several coils looped around the eagle's foot).

Another interesting observation which is unique in my experience was a Turkey Vulture standing in an eagle's nest 70 feet up in an oak tree on Grove Neck, Cecil County, Maryland, on 24 March 1970! It was not in the nest on our

first fly-over, but ~~was there~~ about  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour later when we flew over again. It didn't appear to be eating anything and was not in an incubating posture.

A summary of the survey results for 1970 is in Table I.

As compared with 1969, the 1970 results show a sharp drop in the percent of rechecked active nests which hatched young (40.8% in 1969 to 32.6% in 1970). In 1969, 20 of 49 rechecked active nests hatched 30 young, while 28 rechecked active nests were abandoned and one was destroyed.

The 1970 results are most disappointing since after the 1969 season it appeared that the number of rechecked active nests hatching young was on a steady, annual rise from a low of 10% in 1962. Another comparison: of the 20 pairs which were successful in hatching young in 1969 only seven were successful again in 1970, while four of the 29 unsuccessful pairs in 1969 were successful in hatching young in 1970. Each of the two nests which hatched three young in 1969, hatched only one young in 1970.

In 1969 six pairs hatched two young each; in 1970 only one of these pairs again hatched two young, while three pairs abandoned their nests, one pair produced one young and one pair was inactive (didn't lay).

In 1969, twelve pairs hatched one young each; <sup>in 1970 two of these pairs again hatched one young each,</sup> one pair increased their production to two young, four pairs abandoned their nests, three pairs were inactive and one pair had its active nest cut down by lumbermen.

It is obvious that among the Chesapeake Bay population of some sixty odd pairs of nesting eagles there is much fluctuation in nesting success from year to year for most pairs. For example, Table II lists 17 eagle nests which have produced young at least once in the past four years and shows what success they have had in the other three years. Note that only three of these seventeen nests have produced young in each of the four years.

Table I. Chesapeake Bay Area American Eagle Nest Results, 1970

State	No. of Nests		Active Nests Rechecked	Rechecked Active Nests			No. Yng Hatched	Avge. Yng Per Nest	% Act. Rechecked Nests W/Yng
	Found	Active		W/Yng	Abandoned	Destroyed			
Del	3	2	1	1	-	-	1	1	100%
Md	77	26	24	10	13	1*	13	1.3	41.66%
Va	80+	30	27	6	20	1**	8	1.3	22.22%
Total	160+	58	52	17	33	2	22	1.3	32.6%

\* Storm

\*\* Cut down while active

Table II

Nesting Success of 17 Pairs of American Eagles  
for the Period 1967 Through 1970

State	County	Location	Yearly Results
Del	Kent	Bombay Hook	67-69, active, abandoned; 70, 1 young
Md	Cecil	Grove Neck	67, 1 yng; 68-69, inactive; 70, active, results?*
Md	Kent	Remington Farms	67-68, inactive; 69, 1 yng; 70, 2 yng
Md	QA	Greenwood Creek	67, 1 yng; 68, 1 yng; 69, 3 yng; 70, 1 yng
Md	St. M.	Oakley	67, active, abandoned; 68, 1 yng; 69, 2 yng; 70 2 yng.
Md	Charles	Taylor Neck	67-68, inactive; 69, active, abandoned, 70, 1 yng
Md	Charles	Md. Point	67, inactive; 68, active, results?*; 69, 2 yng, 70 inactive
Va	Fairfax	Mason's Neck	67, 68, 69, 70 - 1 yng each year
Va	Stafford	Aquia Creek	67, 1 yng; 68, inactive; 69, abandoned; 70, active, reaf*
Va	Westmoreland	Chantilly	67, 68, 69 - 1 yng each year; 70, 2 yng
Va	Northum.	Wicomico Church	67, 68, 69 - 1 yng each yr; 70, nest tree cut down while active. A new nest built but not used.
Va	Richmond	Montross	67, R.T. Hawk; 68, 1 yng, 69, 2 yng; 70, 1 yng
Va	Richmond	Moratico	67, 68, active, abandoned; 69, 1 yng; 70, active, abandoned
Va	Middlesex	Healy's	67, 2 yng; 68, 2 yng; 69, inactive, power company cut nest tree down, new nest built but not used; 70, 2 yng in another new nest.
Va	King Wm	West Point	67, 1 yng; 68, 1 yng; 69, inactive; 70, 1 yng
Va	New Kent	New Kent	67, 68, 69 - active, abandoned; 70, 1 yng
Va	Surry	Hog Isld	67, 68, inactive; 69, 1 yng; 70, active, abandoned

\* These could have produced young but could not see into them from aircraft due to thick foliage in May and June.

