

GROWLS

Eagle Monitoring Team



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Eagle Monitoring Team (Monitoring Gabriola eagle nests since 1988)

- Purpose
 - Identify where nests are so we can protect surrounding habitat
 - Record location and mark with signs to indicate protected trees
 - Monitor condition of nests
 - Track how our eagle population is faring over the years
- Most nests are on private property so we do not know where they are and can only monitor if people advise us or allow us to come on their property to monitor



Eagle Monitoring Team - Role

Primarily March thru July, our team will

- Head out to check up on all the known nests
- Document photos of nests and eagles
- Record data
- Mark on map, if new

Eagle Monitoring Team - Role

- Record specific info and record onto a spreadsheet
 - location / coordinates
 - shape of the tree and nest ;
 - activity around the nest and in the nest (#adults visible, #chicks visible, anything of note - ie branching mantling etc)

					FIELD DATA									
NEST #	Location Name	Assigned	GPS of tree	Directions (GPS of viewing spot and direction to nest, access method)	Monitor initials	Equipment (binocular, telescope, camera)	Date Monitored	Photo taken (Y/N)	#Adults in nest	#Adults near nest	# of Chicks noticeable	Nest Condition	Tree Cond.	Observation Notes (i.e sounds, activity eg hatching/fledging, unique weather etc)
New		CF			CF	camera	july 27/ 25	Y		1 tnear nest hen 2 around corner	1			Juvenile in nest - saw eagles in bayon east side near nest and then saw 2 adults on the north side of the island - not sure if the same family or another family
New					CF	camera	july 27/ 25	Y		1	1	good	good	
					VS,CF,LB	all	3/19/2026	y		5				Hard to identify nest but lots of eagle activity. 2 adults near nest.

Eagle demographics

- Eagles are Canada's Largest bird of prey
- Almost 1/2 of the population of 70,000 bald eagles reside in Alaska and 20,000 in BC.
- They flourish here in part because of the salmon.
- Several eagles flying in a thermal together are known as a kettle of eagles.



Eagle demographics

- Mates stay together all of their lives and can live up to 40 Years
- They lay an average of 2 eggs per year until the age of 25-30
- Bald eagles can fly to an altitude of 10,000 ft. During level flight they can achieve speeds of up to 50km/hr.
- They may roam more than 30 km from their nest in search of food



Adult Eagles

At 5 years of age, both male & female bald eagles have a snow white head, neck and tail.

Their beaks & talons are a bright yellow.



Adult Eagles

Female bald eagles are larger than their male counterparts.

The females body length is 1.1 m, weigh 6.8 kg & wingspan is 2.3m

The male is 0.8 m, weighs 4.3kg & wingspan 2.1m.



Adult Eagles

An eagles eye is almost as large as a human's, but its sharpness is 4 times that of a person with perfect vision.



Adult Eagles

- Eagles do not have vocal chords
- Sound is produced in the Syrinx, a bony chamber where the trachea divides to go to the lungs.
- Four different calls have been distinguished
 - high whining gull like scream, broken into a series of rapid cries.
- Bald eagles are most vocal when mating, threatened or annoyed



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Adult Eagles

- Eagles do not sweat so they need to use other cooling methods such as perching in the shade, panting, and holding their wings away from their body.
- Many layers of feathers trap hair to insulate them from cold and protect from rain.
- How many feathers do you think a mature eagle has?



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Adult Eagles

The bald eagle is a strong swimmer but if the water is very cold it can be overcome by hypothermia



Baby Eagles

- Eagles lay 2 sometimes 3 off-white or buff coloured speckled eggs about the size of a goose egg,
- Egg laying takes place mid March to early April. Incubation lasts about 35 days.
- Eggs hatch in the order they were laid and the eaglets have soft greyish-white down



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Baby Eagles

- At birth, they cannot stand on their own
- They have limited vision and are totally dependent on parents for first few days
- Parents are very careful not to skew the babies with their talons



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Baby Eagles

Down is gradually replaced by feathers starting at about 6 weeks of age. It is fully feathered by about 10 weeks old



Baby Eagles

For the first 4 to 6 weeks after fledgling the young eagles remain attached to the nest & their parents



Baby Eagles

As eaglets grow stronger, they practice exercising their wings, and take short hops with lots of wing flapping on the edge of the nest



Baby Eagles

- After 10-13 weeks will finally leave nest on short flights (approx 85 days)
- Most immature eagles are awkward fliers at first and crash landings are commonplace.



Juvenile Eagles

- Spend about 4 years as floaters - wandering unattached to any territory or mate
- Some will return to nest and live their life in that small area they came from



Juvenile Eagles

- Taloning - the brief locking of two bald eagles talons in mid-air is frequently practiced by two immature eagles or adults & occurs during food or territorial disputes.



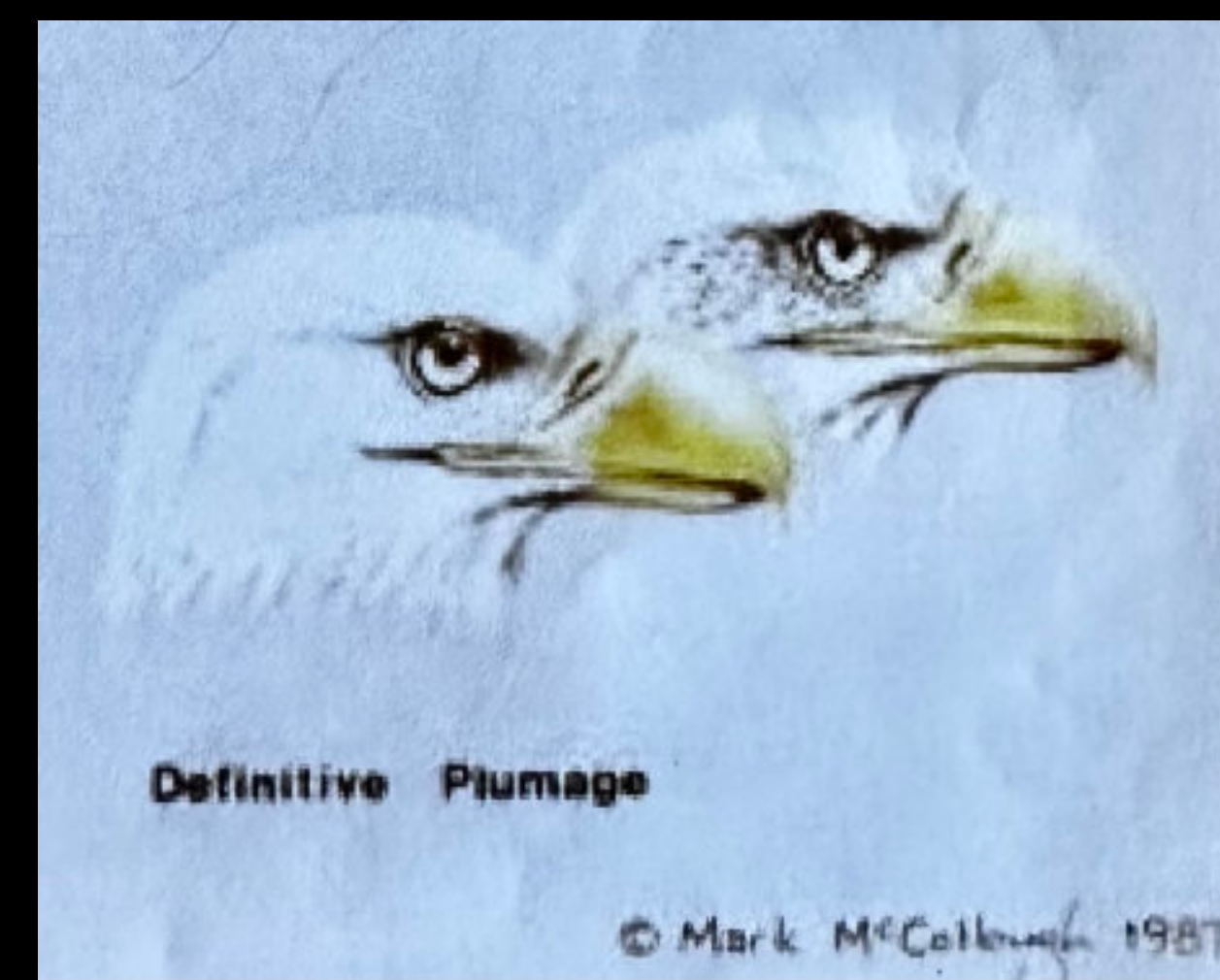
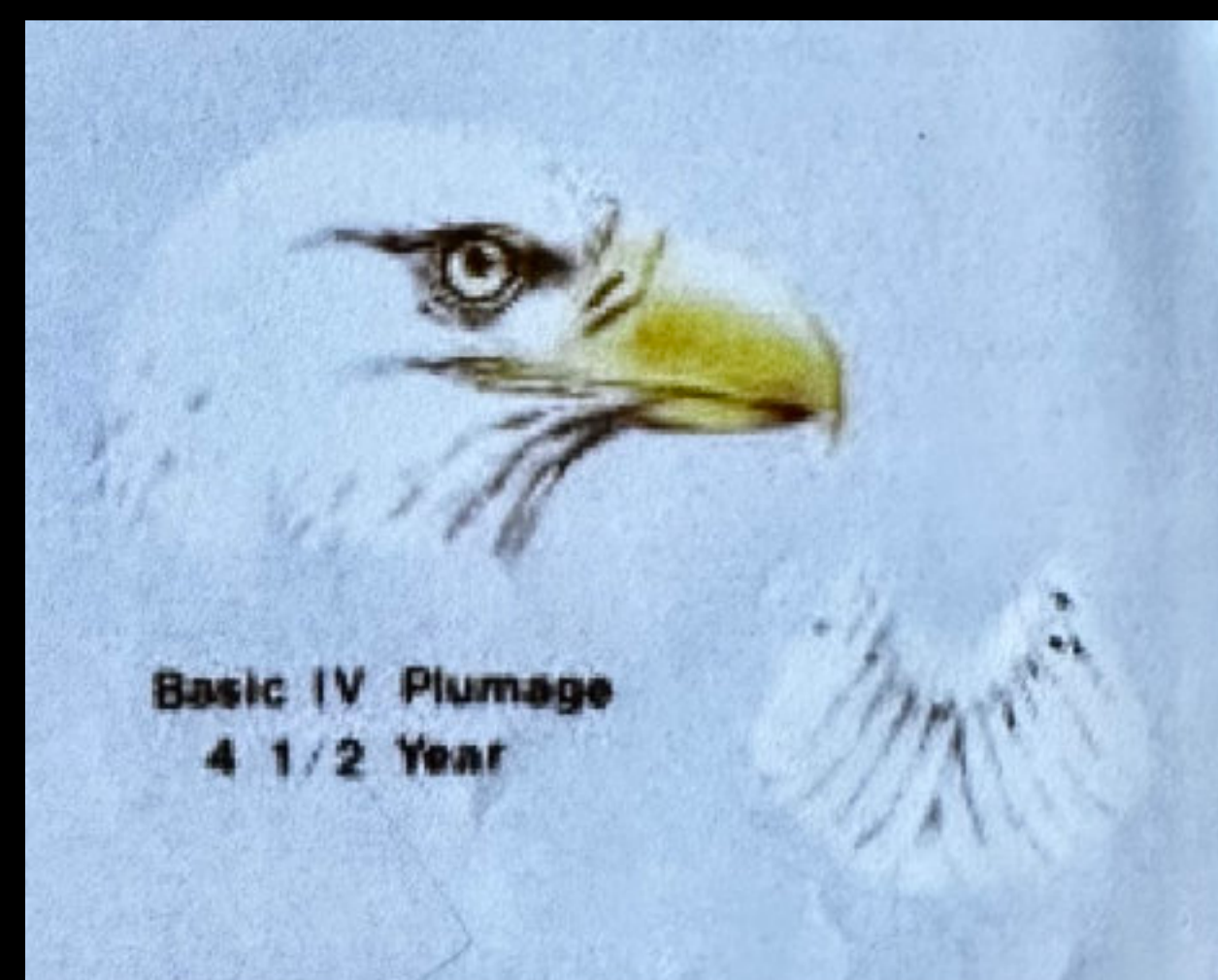
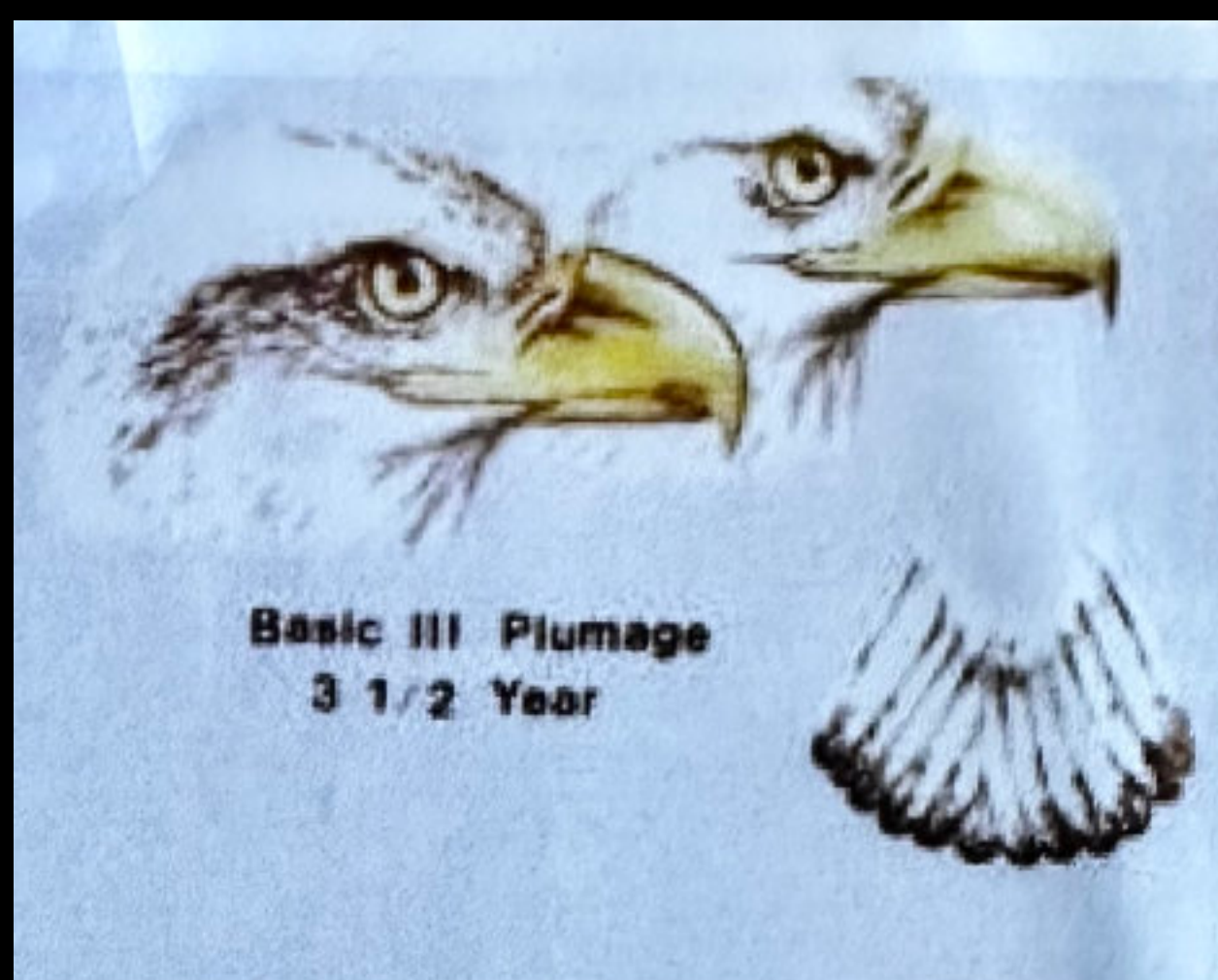
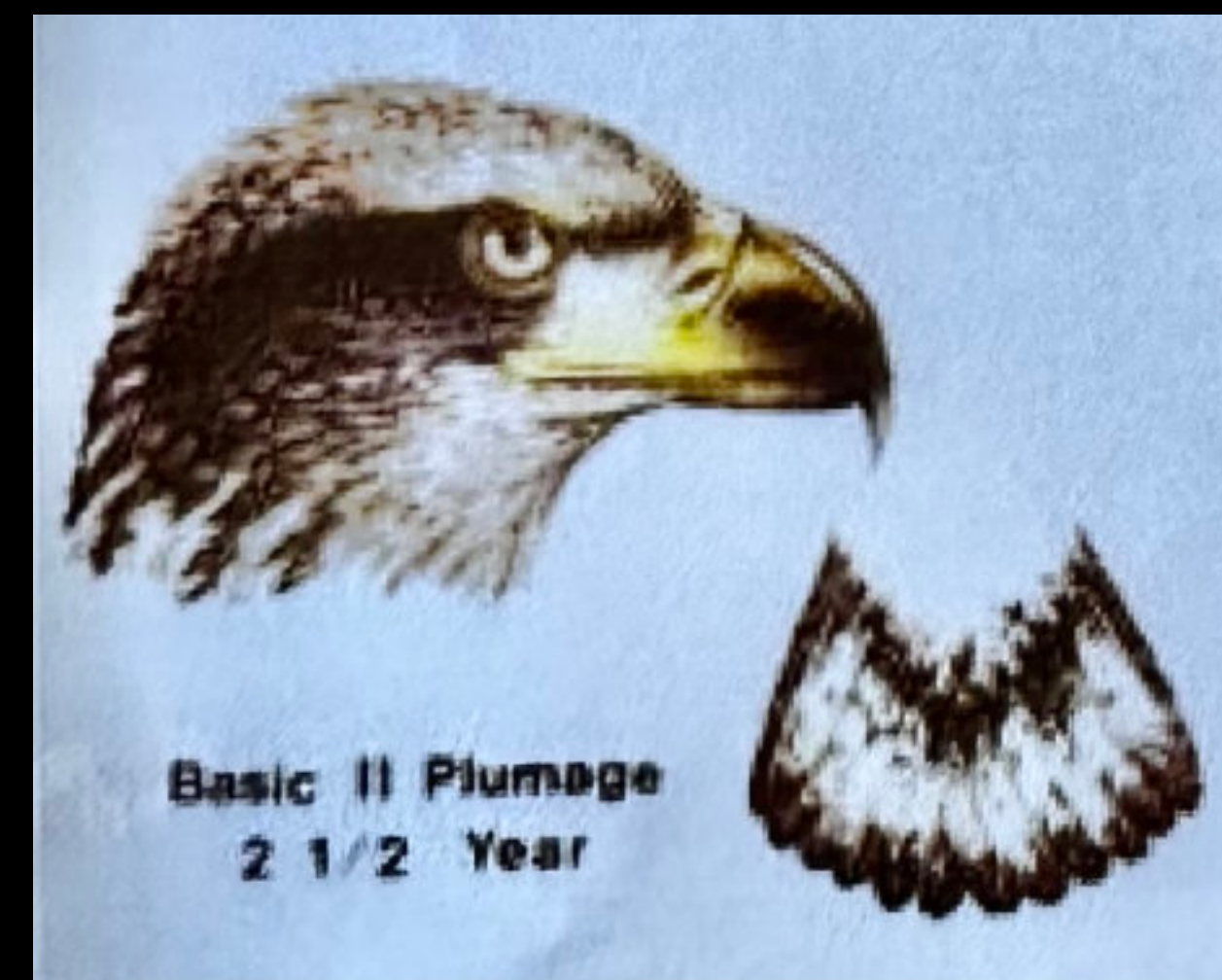
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Juvenile Eagles

- Feathers are brown and speckled white
- White feathers slowly come - 5 years until head is white



Eagle life cycle



Eagle Annual cycle

October	Eagles return from winter travels to begin repairing their nests. First to arrive are the adults, followed through the winter by the juveniles.
November to January	Short winter days are spent hunting, mostly for fish and weakened birds
February	Eagles add finishing touches to an aerie that has become a love nest
March	Usually two eggs are laid, two or three days apart, toward the end of the month.
April	Turn by turn, male and female sit on the eggs for about 35 days
May to June	Chicks hatch around May 1st and grow very quickly. By mid June they're sitting up on the edge of the nest.
July	In early July, the eaglets are "branching," testing their wings high in the nesting tree. They make their first flight about 85 days after hatching.
August to September™	Eagles leave the island to feast on salmon in the tributaries of the Fraser River

Eagle Nests

- Prefer to build in high trees 30m above the ground (over 100 feet)
- Best trees for nests are Douglas Fir, Western Hemlock, Sitka Spruce, and Western Red Cedar
 - 81% built in Douglas Fir trees in Gabriola within half a mile of shores
 - Sometimes in cotton wood or maple - but don't usually last as long



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Eagle Nests

- The nest or aerie are typically 5-6 feet but here on the southwest coast they can be as large as 9 feet across sometimes 6m deep and weigh up to 1.8 tonnes.
- Return each year adding twigs moss and grasses making a soft warm moss in centre for the babies



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Eagle Nests

- If nests get too heavy over years of build up, they can topple trees
- Return to same nest year over year but will build back-up nests in neighbouring trees and may move to them as needed
- Some are better nest makes that others



Living with Eagles

- Eagles have many Threats
 - Loss of habitat due to development
 - Hit by cars
 - Electrocuted on power lines
 - BC hydro has come to install disks in known areas where young eagles
 - Poisoned by chemicals
 - Shot by poachers (even if not killed, lead in bullets poison them)



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Living with Eagles

What can you do to help them During Nesting Season (March - July)

- Avoid construction
- Avoid logging and burning
- Avoid chainsaws, chippers and heavy equipment
- Keep your property as natural as possible
 - Preserve large trees
 - Avoid draining or filling wetlands and marshes
 - NEVER use chemicals to kill plants or animals



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Living with Eagles - Legal Obligations

Eagles and nesting trees are protected by the BC Wildlife Act

- It is an offence to destroy a nest whether in use or not
- Destroyed Nests (i.e. from windstorms or snowstorms) are still protected as the Eagles may come back to repair it
- Harming trees or nests can result in a fine of \$100,000 and / or a year in prison
- Islands Trust requires a protective screen of natural vegetation must be retained within a 25 foot radius of the trunk of a tree bearing nests of Herons, Eagles, Ospreys, Vultures, Falcons, Hawks and Owls
- While the BC wildlife Act protects nests but not habitat around it; they strongly recommend establishing year round buffer of 60 meters always and 100 meters during breeding season



Inter-species Nurturing

- There are instances where Eagles have adopted babies from other species
- Our Red Tail Hawk story of Malala and Junior



A bald eagle is perched on a thick, gnarled branch of a large evergreen tree. The eagle has a white head and neck, a dark brown body, and is looking towards the camera. The background is a lush, green valley with rolling hills and dense forest, partially obscured by the branches of the tree in the foreground. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Thank You for
protecting our
Eagles