

BALD EAGLE

The bald eagle is the Endangered Species Act's (ESA) highest profile species. Due to its prominence, the Act's supporters have put perhaps more effort into claiming the eagle as an ESA success story than for any other species. Furthermore, the eagle's status as the single most recognizable species listed under the ESA has made the stakes over whether and to what degree it has been conserved by the Act the highest for any endangered or threatened species. There are thirteen issues the eagle's conservation.

- 1) The ban of the pesticide DDT in 1972 is the paramount reason for the eagle's recovery, not the passage of the ESA in 1973.
- 2) The role played by ESA related habitat conservation may have caused more harm than good on private lands, which is where most bald eagles live. Habitat conservation on public lands was likely beneficial.
- 3) Advocates of the ESA misleadingly conflate habitat conservation with the paramount importance of the DDT ban.
- 4) 70% of the eagles in the lower 48 states received no protection from the ESA for four years, from 1973-1978. This diminishes the necessity of the Act in the eagle's conservation because this was the time period during which the eagle's status was perhaps most precarious.
- 5) States and private organizations were largely responsible for reintroductions, not the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS).
- 6) States largely carried out population surveys, not the FWS.
- 7) The presence of around 70% of the bald eagle's entire population in Alaska and British Columbia Canada belies claims by ESA proponents that the species was headed for extinction.
- 8) Laws other than the ESA and the eagle's charisma had much to do with declines in shooting mortality and therefore diminish the importance of the ESA.
- 9) The ESA was a key factor in banning lead shot for waterfowl hunting, which was beneficial to the bald eagle, but of much less significance than the DDT ban.
- 10) The creation by the FWS of multiple recovery regions was a waste of valuable resources.

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- 11) The eagle's delisting was delayed due to a desire not to lose the bald eagle as both a tool for land-use control and fundraising.
- 12) The FWS delisted the bald eagle in name only due to the transfer of much of the ESA's land-use control provisions to another federal law.
- 13) The post-delisting monitoring plan is excessive and a waste of scarce resources.