

# Bald Eagle Nest Summary

North Dakota

January 2026



The Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was removed from the list of endangered species in 2007. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has primary statutory authority for the protection of both Bald and Golden Eagles. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF) maintains a list of Bald Eagle nest sites to monitor the nesting population over time.

Bald Eagles were regular breeders along the Red River, Missouri River, and in the Devils Lake area in the 1800's. In 1978 when the Bald Eagle was listed as endangered, there were no known nesting pairs in North Dakota. By the 1990's, a few nesting pairs had returned to the Missouri River. Since the year 2000, nesting in North Dakota has increased in both number (Figure 1) and distribution (Figure 2). Bald Eagles initiate nests in non-traditional habitat (e.g., tree belts in cropland, cottonwood stands in native prairie pastures), and citizen science is a valuable tool to document new nest locations and update nest status on previously reported sites.

The NDGF issues a news release each spring requesting the public to report eagle nests in an online report form <https://gf.nd.gov/wildlife/nest-reports/bald-eagle>. The NDGF also receives nest site information from other state and federal agencies, consultants conducting environmental reviews, and NDGF staff observe and ground-truth a portion of nests annually. In 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2021, 2022 and 2023 NDGF staff conducted limited aerial surveys of traditional nesting habitat (i.e., Missouri River System, Red River, etc.) and survey known nests.

## Highlights as of 2025:

- 649 nest sites have been documented since the year 2000, and of those:
  - 400 were estimated to be occupied in 2025.
  - 131 have been destroyed (i.e., the tree and/or nest destroyed due to weather events).
- Bald eagle nests have been documented in 51 of the 53 counties.

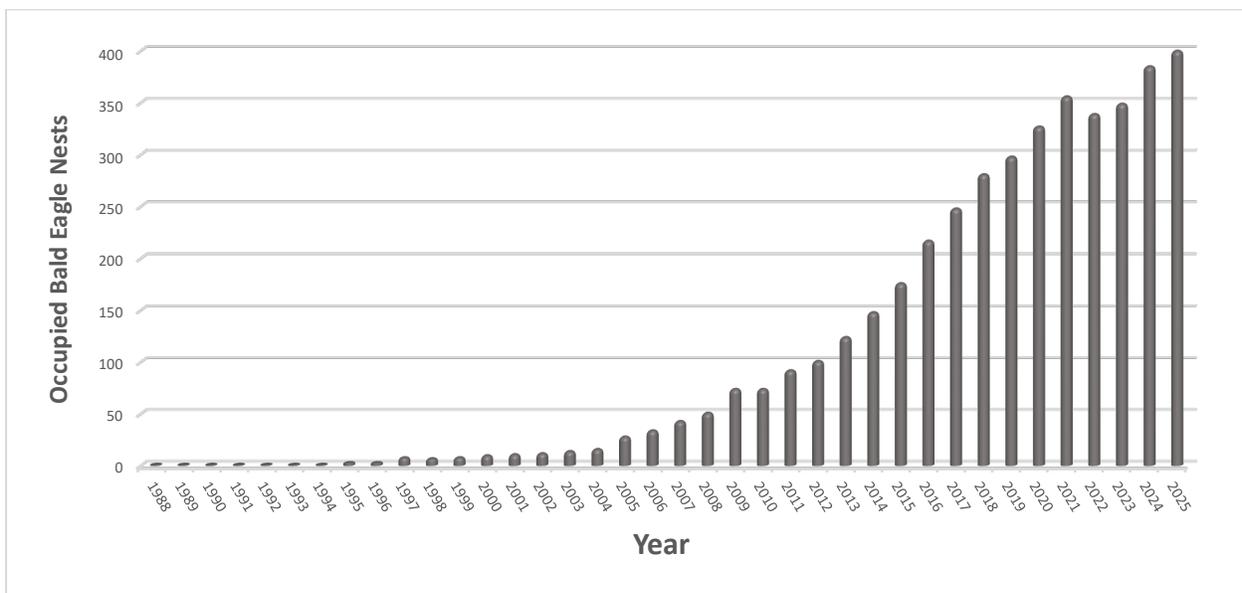


Figure 1. Occupied Bald Eagle nests in North Dakota 1988-2025. A nest is considered occupied if one or more adults are observed on or near the nest, or eggs or young are visible. A census of all nests is not conducted annually but an estimate is made based on the assumption that a nest remains occupied in subsequent years. A reduction in occupied nests during 2022 is likely attributed to HPAI impacts.

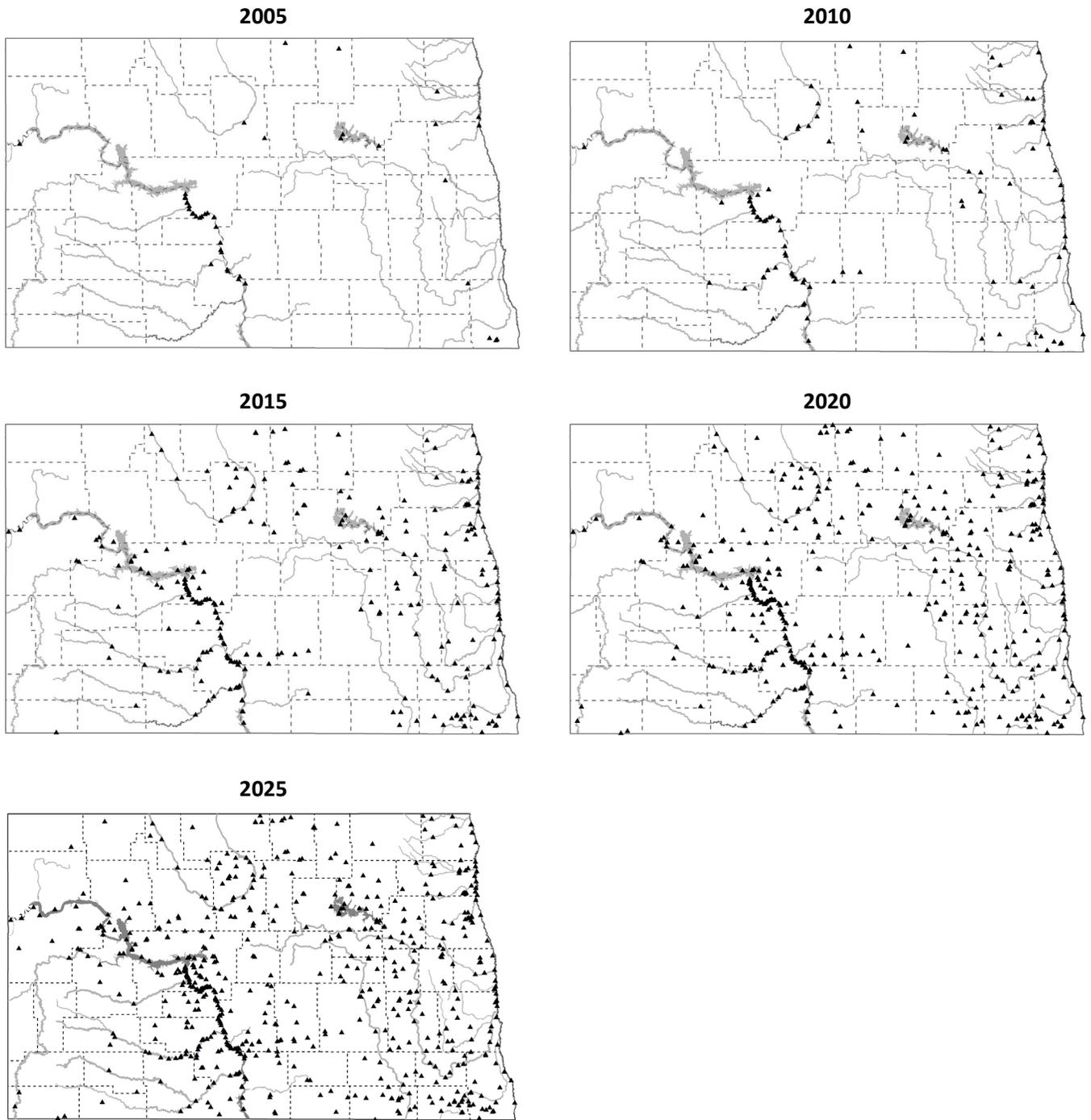


Figure 2. Distribution of all known Bald Eagle nests in 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020 and 2025. Includes nests no longer intact (destroyed).