
THE STATUS OF GOLDEN EAGLES IN THE WEST: MIGRATION, BREEDING, AND ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Robert Domenech, Raptor View Research Institute, P.O. Box 4323, Missoula, Montana 59806, rob.domenech@raptorview.org

Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), are widespread raptors, breeding predominately in western North America, from northern Alaska to central Mexico, occupying a wide range of habitats from arctic tundra to deserts. Several studies have recently indicated decreasing population estimates for migrant and wintering Golden Eagles in the western US. Long-term point count surveys of migrating raptors along the Rocky Mountain Front flyway have indicated approximately a 50-percent decline in total autumnal and vernal Golden Eagle migrants observed over the past 15 yrs and suggest the rate of decline has been increasing. Regionally, specific populations in the Lower 48 and parts of Alaska have been well studied on their breeding grounds. Some of these populations appear to be stable, while others show declines. Observed declines, appear to be associated with habitat alterations. Oil and gas resource extraction has increased noticeably across many areas of the West. The demand for resource extraction is growing and now includes renewable energy facilities such as wind farms. Due to the greater than ever human presence on the landscape and projected increases in development, it is critical to assess eagle response to these changes within their current and historic breeding, migration and winter ranges. Mapping current Golden Eagle habitat use, locally and at the landscape level to better understanding the relationships between human activities and eagle ecology, are the vital first steps to creating a balance between maintaining viable Golden Eagle populations and sustainable development.