

Bald Eagles hold a special place in our hearts

BY BRUCE MCCAMMON

It always seems to me that people react a bit more enthusiastically when they see a large, wild animal.

I refer to the group as “charismatic megafauna.” Bighorn sheep, elk, rhinoceros, elephants — the list goes on. See one in the wild and you will almost always hear someone gasp or cry out with glee.

The same holds true for large birds that we see in eastern Washington.

Great Egrets, Great Blue Heron and Osprey all qualify to fit in a class of large, charismatic birds.

For me, though, the Bald Eagle sits at the top of the list of big, stunning birds. With a wingspan of up to eight feet, bright white head and tail on a dark body, an adult Bald Eagle is hard to miss.



Bruce McCammon is retired, color-blind and enjoys photographing the birds in north central Washington.



Our national bird holds a special place in American’s hearts.

The Bald Eagle population declined at the beginning of the 20th century due to hunting and pesticide use. Today, the number of Bald Eagles is increasing due to restrictions of pesticide use, conservation efforts and a lot of work by citizens and various state or federal agencies.

Bald Eagles are seen in large numbers in Alaska where they

forage on extensive salmon runs. In north central Washington, Bald Eagles are a seasonal visitor. They might be seen here during any month but they are most numerous in the late fall and winter.

When I notice that our Osprey population has disappeared or decreased I start looking for eagles. They are commonly reported along the Wenatchee and Columbia Rivers.

We enjoy counting them as we drive to Montana or Oregon. We keep a list of sightings as we walk the Apple Capital Loop Trail and the Horan Natural Area.

As a bird photographer, I am always looking for a dramatic photo of a Bald Eagle.

The classic image shows an eagle swooping down to grab a fish from a river or lake. Eagles, unlike Osprey, do not dive into the water after their prey. They rely on their powerful talons to

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grab and secure a fish as they fly by.

Osprey dive into the water after fish, fully submerging their bodies. Both are spectacular events to witness.

Someday I hope to be at the right place at the right time with my camera.

I hope you get to see several Bald Eagles as you drive or hike through our area this winter. Anywhere along the Wenatchee River or the Columbia could be productive. Don’t forget your binoculars and camera. Good luck.