

FOCUS

Wild Arizona

Key Words

Breeding: the process of creating babies

Fledge: the time when a baby bird first leaves the nest

Historical: something that happened in the past

Reproduce: to make children

By now, most of the **breeding** bald eagles found in Arizona have returned to their nests and laid eggs for this year. This sight is becoming much more common in the state, thanks to the tireless efforts of wildlife biologists and nest-watchers. Although **historical** records indicate bald eagles may have lived in Arizona for hundreds of years, they were eliminated almost completely from the state in the last century. Now, more than 50 breeding pairs live here.

On average, eggs take a little more than a month (about 35 days) to hatch. Chicks look different from their parents. They usually are born with soft white feathers that gradually change to gray. In the following weeks, longer brown and black feathers begin to show. Young birds will not look like the majestic bald eagle we know, with the dark body and white head, until they reach 5 years old!

Unfortunately, some of the chicks will not survive to become adults. They face many threats as they grow up. Can you think of any?



ILLUSTRATION BY TRACY HILL

Some threats are difficult to avoid. Extreme weather conditions can be deadly. If it gets too cold or hot, chicks may not be able to adapt. Intense winds can blow them right out of the nest, or even destroy the nest. While learning to fly, they could become victims of predators, such as coyotes or even other eagles.

Do the math:

The table at the top of the next page shows some data biologists have col-

lected about baby eagle survival. The table shows the number of places in the state where bald eagles could have **reproduced**. This is typically the location where a male and female eagle live together. In addition, the table shows the total number of chicks that survived to **fledge** each year.

Mark this data in the graph provided at the bottom of the next page. Use one color for the number of breeding locations and a different color for the number of fledglings.



By Eric Proctor

Year	Number of Breeding Locations	Number of Fledglings
1972	4	0
1977	9	6
1982	12	13
1987	23	20
1992	28	14
1997	35	24
2002	46	37
2007	53	42

In general, what is happening to eagle populations in Arizona? Are they increasing or decreasing or staying the same?

Does every male and female pair produce fledglings? How do you know?

Based on the graph, how many fledglings would you expect to find in 2012?

In your opinion, does every male and female pair need to create a baby every year for bald eagles to survive in the state? Explain your answer.

Just for fun:

Aside from the threats listed earlier, another one is just as bad: littering, particularly when fishing. You see, when people are fishing, they sometimes leave behind some of the fishing line. This can be dangerous for bald eagles. They may get tangled up in the line or even swallow a hook. The good news is that if we let people know

about the problem, we can prevent this threat.

Pretend you manage a lake where bald eagles nest. Develop a sign you could post around the lake, encouraging visitors to clean up their fishing line and other trash. Signs use very few words to make a big point. They can include an image such as a drawing of an eagle. Many signs are in the shape of a square or rectangle, but they also may be a circle or some other shape. Choose the shape, image and words you think will remind people not to litter or leave fishing line near your lake. 🦅

■ This feature is part of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Focus Wild Arizona program, a free educational program for teachers, parents, students or anyone interested in learning about wildlife and habitat. Visit our Web site, www.azgfd.gov/focuswild, to find exciting lessons and resources.

Bald Eagle Fledglings in Arizona

