

THE EAGLES HAVE LANDED!!!

James A. Beemer, Fish & Wildlife Biologist

Each winter, no matter how cold, brings a bright spot to USMA. Bald eagles return to spend the winter along the Hudson River near West Point.

These magnificent birds that are seen along the river each winter primarily spend the breeding season (spring to fall) in Canada and Maine. When the waters up north freeze up and temperatures plummet, the eagles fly down to spend some time along the Hudson River before returning back home when it warms up again. The bald eagles that spend their winters along the Hudson are the second-largest concentration of wintering eagles in New York. Only the eagle population that spends its winters along the Delaware River is greater in number.

The period from mid-January to mid-February is when the greatest number of bald eagles can be seen in the Hudson Valley. Observers have counted as many as 140 eagles along the Hudson River during recent bald eagle surveys.

West Point captured four bald eagles in 1998 in a joint telemetry study with New York State. While the transmitters are no longer working, all four eagles were fitted with white wing tags displaying a black, 3-inch high number - either "39", "43", "44" or "45". One of these birds - 43 - has often be seen around Con Hook near the Town of Highlands wastewater treatment plant in Highland Falls. We don't know if any one of the birds is still alive, but if they are and in the area, you should still see their wing tags. If any one of these birds is seen, please report it as soon as possible to the Natural Resources Branch at 938-3857 or by email (yj6936@exmail.usma.army.mil).

Eagle 45, a mature male now, has been mostly seen over in the Delaware River eagle wintering area. It is possible he will make day trips over to the Hudson River if he gets the urge.

As part of West Point's commitment to sound management of its natural resources, USMA personnel are asked to report all bald eagles seen anywhere on USMA properties. Use the phone number or email address listed above.

For those individuals interested in just seeing an eagle, the North Dock area below Eisenhower Hall is an excellent place to view them. You will need binoculars or a spotting scope. Concentrate your viewing efforts between 0800 and 1430 hours each day. Additionally, the Natural Resources Branch has copies of the pamphlet "Bald Eagles of the Hudson River" which includes where the best locations to see bald eagles are locally. Copies can be requested from the Natural Resources Branch.

Questions about eagles may be directed to the Wildlife Biologist at 938-3857.