

PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR GOLDEN EAGLE MANAGEMENT IN MAINE

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August 31, 2004 - Final

Problem 1: Foraging opportunities seem to be a primary limiting factor for golden eagles in Maine, appear atypical for the species, and are poorly documented in the state. Chronic nesting failures during the period 1985 – 1999, and apparent extirpation of the species since, have precluded recent attempts intended to advance insights on this subject.

Strategy 1.1: Continue monitoring traditional and suspected nest sites to validate renewed residency of golden eagles in Maine, and conduct appropriate research.

Strategy 1.2: Initiate a telemetry study of home range, foraging activity, and general habitat uses by resident golden eagles if a research opportunity (*i.e.*, successful nesting incident) arises in Maine.

Strategy 1.3: Encourage comparable studies in any similar habitats occupied by golden eagles breeding in eastern North America.

Strategy 1.4: Evaluate subtle changes in forest practices (*e.g.*, fewer clear-cuts and improved road access to facilitate partial harvests) that may decrease overall suitability of Maine woodlands for golden eagles.

Problem 2: Unless future insights prove otherwise, the availability of suitable nest sites is also highly limiting to potential residency of golden eagles in Maine.

Strategy 2.1: Work cooperatively with landowners to maintain traditional land uses of the few settings used by nesting golden eagles.

Strategy 2.2: Support programs, policies, land use planning, and conservation efforts that perpetuate Maine's landscape of woodlands. This habitat is unusual for golden eagles, but most historic nest sites in Maine are in industrial forests. Develop assurances against land use conversions by pursuing working forestland easements, enrollment in the Forest Legacy Program, purchases of lands or development rights, etc. rather than regulatory strategies.

Strategy 2.3: Work with managers and recreational users to assure that scenic hiking trails and rock climbing do not jeopardize suitability of traditional golden eagle habitats, especially the few sites on public land. The Maine

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Department of Conservation, Bureau of Parks and Lands has primary jurisdiction on two sites.

Problem 3: Current staff and funding available to this, and many other conservation programs, are inadequate to fully address needs. Golden eagles have never been a priority in federal aid, because the species has long been extirpated elsewhere in the East but very secure in the West.

Strategy 3.1: Promote broadened public awareness, support, and funding for programs.

Strategy 3.2: Explore studies to evaluate “distinct population segment” and/or genetic separation between golden eagles in Maine / eastern North America from those in the West.

Problem 4: Despite scant documentation, environmental contaminants likely contributed to the recent extirpation of golden eagles breeding in the northeastern U.S. and may still pose a limiting factor for their re-establishment.

Strategy 4.1: Evaluate contaminant residues in appropriate samples from golden eagles (addled eggs, liver tissue from carcasses) as available from Maine. Encourage similar studies for comparisons to resident populations in Quebec and Labrador.

Strategy 4.2: Review available data on contaminant residues in potential golden eagle prey in Maine: e.g., wading birds (especially great blue herons) and cormorants from inland settings. Baseline studies of this subject are warranted before further discussions of potential golden eagle reintroductions in the state.