

American Bald Eagles At Home in the World

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To any naturalist in the world certain place names carry overtones of excitement and longing. One of these is Alaska, name of a state famous for untouched wilderness, wildlife and relative remoteness from the usual haunts of mankind.

Unfortunately for nature and for wildlife, this beautiful balance is being put to the test more and more. Alaska's much cherished clean environment is losing its lustre. The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill brought us all to a brutal awakening. The world followed in dismay the pollution of shorelines and the struggle for survival by entrapped waterfowl, seals, otters, eagles and other species. Our wildlife, our environment, became victims of the failure of a whole industrialized nation. All the finesse of modern world technology could not help.



A juvenile Bald Eagle. Photo by Mike Jacobson.

Fortunately, wise people in Alaska and other parts of the world have been observing the steady degeneration of nature, the brutal and careless grab of land, the destruction of wildlife and the pollution of air and water. Although not always popular, they have

slowed down the deadly tidal wave by legislating wilderness parks, resource management areas, eagle preserves and bird sanctuaries. We should all be grateful for their foresight. Luckily, a broad, new stream of conservation consciousness has started to run through states and provinces. At no other time is this miraculous change of mind more evident than during election campaigns. Environment and nature are definitely in!

Even more fortunate, there are signs of action. In the United States demonstrated its bipartisan commitment for waterfowl and wetlands with the long overdue passage of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. By working in cooperation with the Canadian Wildlife Service and provincial conservation agencies, as well as with Ducks Unlimited, they are setting an encouraging example of collaboration involving two countries and a model conservation organization.

This new vigor promoting a safer environment has also reached the corporate world. More and more initiatives are becoming the trademark of industrial leaders. "The Greening of Corporate Canada" or "MacDonald's environmentally friendly packaging" are now part of headlines in financial magazines. People are even talking about global warming now.

As Patrick Carson, vice-president of environmental affairs for Loblaw International Inc. of Toronto said recently, "Businesses have to realize they can no longer divorce their balance sheets from nature's bottom line."

Many North American companies have already recognized this and are finding financial rewards by responding to consumer demands for environmentally friendly products and production methods. One of the challenges for business leaders and politicians in the 1990s is to hammer out a set of international principles that will enable businesses to progress technologically and economically and to benefit shareholders and the population at large without harming the fragile environment.

What has all this to do with the American Bald Eagle?

Eagles have long had a dominant place in religious and political symbolism of humankind and they have an even longer history as a symbol of earthly power. For thousands of years the eagle underlined the mightiness of emperors, kings, warriors and statesmen. The history of North America is living proof of the eagle's powers and grace. Few symbols have had a bigger impact on men of different origins, cultures and colours.

The American Bald Eagle Foundation, in close cooperation with the Bald Eagle (Jay Hammond) Research Institute, the University of Alaska Southeast and the Government of Alaska should work to help the Bald Eagle flourish once again in all the Lower 48 states and Canada. Thus, we cannot only help an endangered species to survive, but we can also help the inhabitants of this continent to better air, a safer environment and happier coexistence. As members of the American Bald Eagle (Jay Hammond) Research Institute we have the obligation to help the many millions living in the present civilization realize how essential nature is for our culture and our survival.

Resurrection of the Bald Eagle on this continent is the goal of our involvement. With the help of wildlife specialists, industrial leaders, politicians and governments we shall be able to show the world an example of wildlife management gone right. While history is important and nostalgia is nice, the time is now, to make our strongest stand for the Bald Eagle.



Photo by Bob Armstrong.