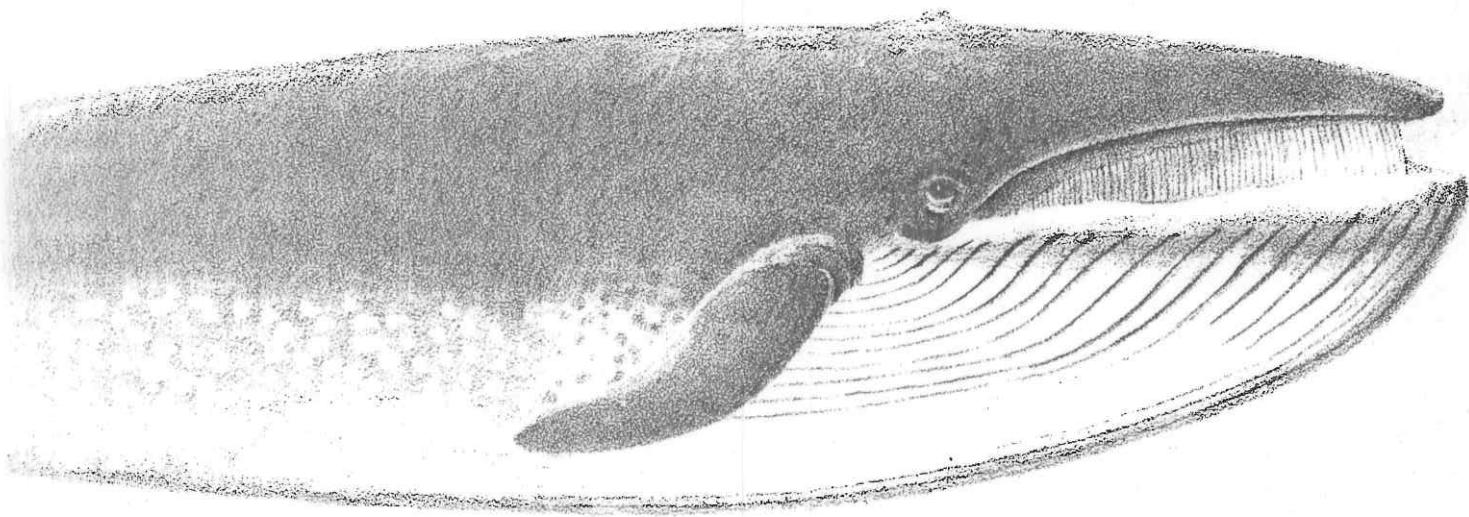


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# OUTDOOR CALIFORNIA

MAY - JUNE 1982



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1982

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When the time came for a new die to be cut in 1841, the artist worked from an impression made by the old, worn die, rather than from Thomson's verbal description. Although this second seal had several design faults, the eagle was improved, becoming a more robust, lifelike creature. The next version, cut in 1877, was a facsimile of the 1782 die, and the errors were perpetuated.

Public criticisms of the design errors and omissions prompted the



The third committee's seal design, submitted to Congress in May 1782. Lawyer-artist William Barton incorporated a small eagle into this version.



The First Great Seal of the United States, 1782. The thin, awkward eagle became more robust and lifelike in later cuts of the Great Seal die.

cutting of still another die in 1885. It faithfully depicted the design adopted by Congress in the original written description. In this final design, the bird is unmistakably a bald eagle, with white head and tail and powerful legs. Strong talons grasp an olive branch and a bundle of 13 arrows realistically from behind, not from the front as in previous seals. A new die cut in 1904 is a facsimile of the last and is the seal and emblem used today. A one dollar bill is one

of many places where the great seal may be found.

The Great Seal of the United States has influenced the design of great seals of many states, seals of offices—such as the President's Seal—medals, currency, stamps, uniform buttons, ornamentation on government buildings and uncounted commercial logos. And no other feature of the seal has had as much influence on these designs and symbols as has the American bald eagle. #



The Great Seal of the United States, 1841. The left talon held only six, instead of the legally-required 13 arrows. The 1877 Great Seal was a facsimile of this.

## It's all in the name

The common name, bald eagle, and the scientific name, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, tell us much about the appearance and habits of this bird.

The bald eagle is one of eight species of the genus *Haliaeetus* in the world. These are large, fish-eating eagles, called "sea eagles," and most have white heads or white tails, or both, as adults. The genus name is a Latin description for "fish eagle." The species name, *leucocephalus*, is Latin for "white head." Its common, or vernacular name, "bald," refers to the white feathers on the head, not to a lack of feathers.

The proper vernacular name of this species is bald eagle, according to the American Ornithologists' Union, the organization that maintains a standardized checklist of North American bird names. But as one might expect, the striking appearance and specialized feeding behavior of the bald eagle have inspired numerous names and nicknames for this bird. Many of these were regional in origin. They include fish eagle, sea eagle, white-

headed sea eagle, white-headed eagle, white-tailed eagle, black and brown eagle, black eagle, gray eagle, mottled eagle, American eagle, American bald eagle, Alaska eagle, Washington bald eagle, "bird of Washington" and "bird-o'-freedom."

Bald eagles from northern latitudes are larger than those from the southern portions of the breeding range. On the basis of this general size difference, the species many years ago was considered to comprise two subspecies: the northern bald eagle *H. l. alascanus* and the southern bald eagle *H. l. leucocephalus*, but the boundaries of the breeding ranges for these two forms were arbitrary. Actually, there is a gradual increase in size of breeding bald eagles from south to north, and a subspecies separation is considered by many eagle researchers to be unjustified.

The California and federal endangered species lists no longer recognize this subspecies separation for bald eagles. #

— Ronald M. Jurek