

California & Nevada
Golden Eagle Working Group Prospectus
Revised January 17, 2013

Purpose and Need:

Golden Eagles are found in mountainous areas, cliffs, canyons, deserts, shrub lands, grasslands, oak woodlands, forest and in other habitats throughout California and Nevada. In Western North America, Golden Eagles range from northern Alaska south to Baja and northern Mexico. To date, limited population information exists on Golden Eagles in California and Nevada, however the population in North America appears to be in decline (Kochert and Steenhof 2002). Anecdotal observations and a few published data on Golden Eagle ecology from California and Nevada suggest that the population has decreased from historic (Grinnell 1944) and recent times in certain locations. The current population of adults, floaters, migrants, and sub-adults is unknown. Nevada's Golden Eagle breeding populations were regularly monitored from 1974-1985 but subsequent monitoring has been opportunistic. The extant regional distribution of the species, their territories, and population trends are largely unknown, although, recent efforts have been completed in California and Nevada to update nesting information, and in some cases wintering use.

Golden Eagles are a public trust resource. In California, the species has been listed as Fully Protected by the California State Legislature. The Fully Protected status is meant to provide additional protection to wildlife that are rare or face possible extinction. Fully Protected species can only be taken for the purpose of scientific research, or in the case of birds, to relocate for the protection of livestock. In Nevada, Golden Eagles are protected under Nevada Revised Statute 503.610. The statute makes it illegal to possess or capture eagles although eagle take may be permitted if serious injury to agricultural or other interests has occurred. The species is also protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

To date, Golden Eagle monitoring, management, and other conservation actions in California and Nevada have been accomplished by individual agencies and entities with limited coordination. Monitoring and research activities have been implemented under individual state and federal permits and researchers do not always coordinate their efforts statewide or regionally. Additionally, researchers and/or contractors are not always required to provide Golden Eagle data due to inadequate permitting mechanisms; hence data is not always shared and/or provided to Federal and State agencies. Recently, there has been an increase in both interest and need to evaluate potential effects of increased human presence on the landscape to Golden Eagle populations, and to identify means to increase and sustain healthy populations. Coordination of field efforts and assimilation of data are required not only to avoid duplication of effort and undue disturbance to the species, but to understand and manage populations at regional scales.

The purpose of the Golden Eagle Working Group is to provide a forum for state and federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, researchers, landowners, and other interested parties

to discuss and coordinate activities surrounding Golden Eagle inventory, monitoring, research, and conservation efforts in California and Nevada. The Working Group will be led on a rotational basis by US Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Program, Nevada Department of Wildlife and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Subgroups may be formed as needed to address specific issues with participation from interested parties including coordinating efforts with adjacent states and Mexico. Current subgroups include the Research Subgroup and the Database Subgroup.

Goals:

The Golden Eagle Working Group goals include:

- Facilitate research, inventory, and monitoring efforts
- Identify and establish research priorities and conservation strategies
- Coordinate data assimilation
- Facilitate communication regarding national or state survey guidelines and permitting requirements
- Foster training opportunities as necessary

The Golden Eagle Working Group activities may include:

- Coordinate annual field efforts for inventory, monitoring and research including telemetry
- Coordinate the identification and implementation of priority research needs
- Assess the needs for and effectiveness of existing strategies and efforts to conserve nesting territories and foraging habitats
- Identify avoidance recommendations and conservation measures where possible from known threats to Golden Eagles to maintain stable eagle populations (e.g. power line retrofit, wind turbine design and placement, stock tank retrofit, etc.) at the appropriate regional scales
- Identify opportunities to establish an integrated database for eagles (e.g., territory identification, injury and mortality documentation, long term population and productivity monitoring, etc.)
- Help devise and initiate training opportunities

The Working Group will meet twice per year to ensure coordination on wintering and breeding season activities occurs in a timely manner. Subgroups may be formed and meet separately to address and coordinate more specific priority needs. The Golden Eagle Working Group will be comprised of at least one member from each of the public agencies involved in significant actions in the population management and research of Golden Eagles. This includes U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Nevada Department of Wildlife, California Energy Commission, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Defense, California State Parks and National Park Service. Other interested parties are also invited to participate in the working group.