



C L E A R W A T E R

# Navigator

M A R C H / A P R I L 2 0 0 4

SPRING 2004  
SAIL SCHEDULE  
(SEE PAGES 6 & 7)

## HUDSON RIVER REPORT CARD: BALD EAGLES ON THE RISE

By Chris Bowser, Education Director

The bald eagle is an icon of national pride, but it is also an emblem of environmental rebound, especially here in the Hudson Valley.

Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) are an unmistakable and increasingly common sight along the Hudson River. Although equipped with a hunter's seven-foot wingspan and predatory talons, this raptor will scavenge or steal whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Two populations of eagles make use of the Hudson's habitats. Many eagles from more northern states and Canada spend their winters on the Hudson. Since 1980, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has conducted eagle surveys each January (graph at right). In surveys between Albany and Croton numbers have generally grown, with fluctuations due to many factors, including weather severity, breeding success, and even the luck of the surveyors. An eagle banded in 1998 returned to the same site at Constitution Island for 4 consecutive winters, and most likely summered in New Brunswick, Canada.

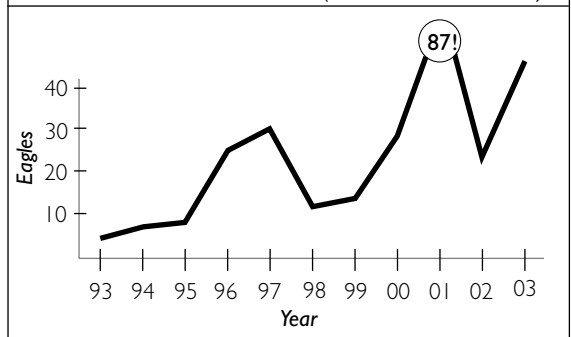
The second group of eagles is the Hudson's breeding population. The first Hudson River eaglet in 100 years was hatched in 1997 near Catskill, NY. The valley had 9 fledglings (young that fly from the nest) in 2003, down from 12 in 2002 (graph below). Most Hudson eaglets are carefully studied and banded by the NYSDEC Endangered Species Unit. There is some mortality each year, from falling, train collisions, and even aggressive eagles. These birds of prey eat very high on the food chain and sometimes have sig-



Eric Lind

A "dirty bird" displays the mottled plumage of eagles less than three years old.

# OF BALD EAGLES OBSERVED (MID-WINTER SURVEYS)

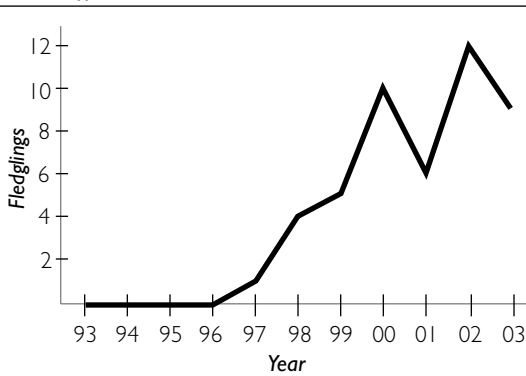


nificant levels of PCBs in their tissues. Others appear to have died from lead poisoning.

Nesting pairs in the lower 48 states have increased from 417 in 1963 to 6,471 in 2000. Nationally, the bald eagle's status changed from "Endangered" to "Threatened" in 1995, indicating hazards still remain. Along the Hudson, development and demand for public use is increasing at a much faster rate than landscape protection. "Habitat is everything," reports Peter Nye of NYSDEC. "How we deal responsibly with the land we have left, for eagles, people, all living things... that's the challenge for mankind."

Information for this article was obtained from the NYSDEC 2003 Bald Eagle Report, available at [www.dec.state.ny.us](http://www.dec.state.ny.us).

# OF YOUNG EAGLES FLEDGED FROM NEST



Source: NYSDEC Bald Eagle Report, 2003

THE GREAT HUDSON RIVER REVIVAL 2004! (SEE PAGES 4 & 5 FOR DETAILS)