

[Page 44 - On the Banding of Eagles](#)ISSUE : [Issue 31](#)

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gotten those by scavenging from something someone's thrown out. We've found birds. In one nest in particular, we found a great deal of great blue heron bones. That nest was located near a great blue heron colony, so it was very easy for them to go over and get either dead young at the base of the colony, or actually maybe pluck some young ones from the colony and take them back to their young. It was a quick, easy meal for them, whereas in most areas the eagle would have a hard time catching a great blue heron or getting to the colony because it would be a long way away. And in those cases it would usually be close to flounder or close to cod or close to something of that sort. (I was under the impression that they actually fish.) They do fish--but it's much easier for them to get a dead meal in the early summer. Anyone who's been fishing on the Bras d'Or Lakes or anywhere has noticed that if anything dies and they throw it back--they'll often see an eagle swoop down and get it. They get used to following fishermen around and taking that meal. I have seen them fish quite a bit, and I'd say likely about 15 to 20% would be fishing. I don't know if you're aware of this, but every so often a flounder will come up to the surface and sort of skim for a little while and then go down. And when they spot them--tremendous eyesight--they nail them. They don't go down for the flounder. The flounder come up. And the eagles also steal from ospreys and they steal from other birds. In the winter they steal a great deal from European cormorants that fish in the open water. They'll watch them and wait till they catch something and then scare them away and eat that. The cormorant dives quite deep and is much more adept at catching fish than the eagle. (The eagle doesn't dive?) Not really. They don't like to get wet. They do get wet. I've seen them actually catch a fish that was too large for them. And they'll start to fly away, and all of a sudden they can't fly. They'll fall in and they'll swim to shore. They have been known to swim, carrying something, for quite a distance, using their wings to propel them toward the closest shore. Quite a remarkable distance. And then eating it there. (And do they attack birds on the wing?) Not really. I haven't seen that happen. I have seen them take birds like ducks. We do some banding of ducks in the winter in Sydney Harbour and along the Sydney River area. And I've actually seen a bird that looked a little bit under the weather, but not enough that I'd keep it overnight. If a bird that I'm banding is really sick, I keep it overnight or a couple days, and then release it--but this one was just borderline, and I decided to let it go. And eagles tend to fly the Sydney River area quite a bit in the winter. They'll fly by and then leave. And this time I saw one fly, sort of look down, and just fall down and actually strike that duck that I'd let go about a minute before. As it was flying over, it just quickly noted that one bird didn't look right, could spot some difference--I'm not sure what it was--but from a height of, say, 75 feet spotted one difference and just bang! it was down and got it and that was its meal for the day. If it was a healthy bird, it could dive, it could fly away. But a weak one, one that isn't healthy, there's more chance that the eagle would be successful; and it tends to spot those weaknesses right away. (What's the future of our eagle population?)



I'm pretty confident that they'll keep doing well, maybe even a few more nests. I think we're getting to the point where some of our young are starting to re-populate other areas of the northeast. I'm not sure of that. We won't know that for a few years, till more of our banded birds reach maturity. But that's what I think could be happening. I think we're getting to a point where we've got the population that we can support, and it seems to be increasing. It's just a feeling I have, but I think that we're getting to the point where our population is almost at the level that we can't support any more. They require a certain territory; they require a certain amount of food.

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