



BALD EAGLE NEST TERMS

There are a lot of fancy words to describe what's going on in the bald eagle nest! You will use most of these throughout the Bald Eagle Nest Watch monitoring season. These terms are sorted in order of when they might happen at the nest. Feel free to contact Drew (drcashman11@yahoo.com) or Brenna (bmarsicek@swibirds.org) with questions.

NEST TREE: The tree the bald eagle nest is located in.

NEST BUILDING: The process of an adult eagle pair adding, arranging, and rearranging sticks in the nest. This occurs mostly prior to egg-laying, but can happen throughout the nesting season.

PAIR BONDING: A courtship activity that involves adult eagles locking talons and tumbling toward the ground before breaking apart and swooping back up into the air.

COPULATION: The act of mating.

INCUBATION: When one adult remains on the nest at all times to keep the newly laid eggs warm. Usually lasts for 30 or so days. Both male and female participate in incubation while the other hunts or perches nearby. A BENW monitor will likely see just the head of the adult, since the rest of the body is hunkered down in the nest. (See top left image.)

VOCALIZATION: One or both of eagles calling out to the other either as a warning, call for help, or general communication.

EGG ROLLING: When the adult stands on the edge of the nest and uses its beak to rotate each of the eggs in the nest. Happens multiple times per day.

BROODING: When the adult hovers above the tiny bodies of the newly hatched chicks to keep them warm without suffocating them. Looks similar to incubation, but more of the adult is visible (head and shoulders, perhaps).

NESTLING: An eaglet that is too young to fly and remains in the nest at all times.

FEEDING: When the adult tears food into small pieces and dips its head into the nest to feed the chicks.

SELF-FEEDING: When the eaglets are old and strong enough to feed themselves.

BRANCHING: When the eaglet hops out onto a branch next to the nest, flapping its wings to practice flying, but doesn't take flight yet.

FLEDGING: When the eaglet takes flight for the first time. Eagle fledgings will return to the nest for another month or so to continue receiving food from the parents.

ADULT (A₁, A₂): Mature, white-headed adult.

YOUNG (Y₁, Y₂, Y₃): The chick(s) in the nest.

SUB-ADULT (S₁, S₂): Another semi-adult eagle, possibly born at the nest in a previous year, that tries to hang around the nest.