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Recovery of Nesting Bald Eagles in Texas

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One of the most successful conservation stories in United States' history resulted in *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (Bald Eagle) being removed recently from the federal endangered species list. Few studies, however, have documented regional long-term recovery trends for Bald Eagles. We quantified Bald Eagle nesting density, distribution, and productivity trends by using aerial surveys of nests located in 69 counties in eastern Texas from 1971-2005. The total number of occupied nests, productive nests, and offspring produced increased exponentially during that time with the most dramatic increases occurring from 1995-2005. Since 1971, the total number of occupied nests increased 13% per year, from 5 in 1971 to 157 in 2005 and the total number of young produced also increased 13% per year, from 6 in 1971 to 195 in 2005. Apparent nest success estimates (50-100%) and mean brood size (1-2 young/nest), however, remained relatively consistent from 1971 to 2005. By 1989, Bald Eagles in Texas exceeded recovery goals set by the Southeastern States Bald Eagle Recovery Team (i.e., >0.9 young produced/occupied nest, >1.5 young produced/successful nest, and >50% of nests successful in raising at least 1 young). Continued regional increases in Bald Eagle nesting activity may warrant specific attention, particularly as related to anthropogenic pressures and interactions in increasingly fragmented and urbanized habitats.