



Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Wayne F. MacCallum, *Director*

Memorandum

TO: Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey Cooperators

FROM: Thomas W. French, Ph.D., Assistant Director

DATE: November 24, 2009

RE: 2010 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey

The 2010 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey will be held on January 8, 2010. In the event of bad weather, the backup date will be January 12, 2010. Should questionable weather occur, you may call my phone in the morning of the survey in Westborough at (508) 389-6355 for any special instructions that will be left in a voice mail message. If you have email, please contact Kim Ausmus, our program's Administrative Specialist, at kim.ausmus@state.ma.us so that she can put you on our email list. If there are any changes in plans, she can send out an email message. The national survey window will be December 30, 2009 to January 13, 2010 so we will be interested in any eagle sightings through this two week period.

The Midwinter Survey provides a unique source of long-term baseline data on eagles. Unlike nesting surveys, it provides information on both breeding and non-breeding segments of the population at a potentially limiting time of the year. It also provides an opportunity to monitor modifications or threats to habitat at important wintering areas. The survey provides a unique framework for assessing long-term trends at a continental scale.

Data analyses have shown that trend estimates are biased when observers switch methods of transportation (air, auto, boat), even when they survey the same area. Hence the USGS biologists who coordinate the national survey reiterate that we must use consistent transportation methods on each Standard Survey Route (SSR).

The Massachusetts count includes 4 SSRs and a large number of "other areas". The 4 SSRs, our state's eagle concentration areas, include: (MA01) Quabbin Reservoir (air), (MA02) Connecticut River (air), (MA03) Merrimack River (auto) and (MA04) Assawompsett Pond (auto).

I have enclosed a copy of the "Instructions for SSRs". If you are responsible for covering one of these SSRs, please read this carefully. Otherwise, it is just a convenient form on which to report sightings of eagles from anywhere in the state. Keep in mind that if you are covering a SSR it is important to cover the same area (.e.g., length of river or amount



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfw_toc.htm

of shoreline) each year. The SSRs should have the same start and end points each year, although it is acceptable to do surveys in reverse order. As stressed above, SSRs should be conducted using the same technique (e.g., air, auto, boat, etc.) each year and to the greatest extent possible the same observers should conduct these surveys each year. The consistency of coverage fostered by these general rules is very important for the trend analysis work. If you have any questions, give me a call.

If you are assigned to cover one of the rather large numbers of our “other areas”, the same level of consistency is not as important. However, it is very important, no matter where you are to remember to carefully record the exact location, time and age for all eagle sightings. Feel free to explore new areas and new approaches if you are looking for eagles outside our four Standard Survey Routes.

Your completed survey forms should be mailed to me, Thomas W. French, at MassWildlife, Field Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581 no later than January 31, 2010. With this mailing, I have included a summary of all the mid-winter Bald Eagle surveys since the beginning in 1979 when only eight birds were seen statewide.

Please feel free to call me if you have questions about coverage areas or any general questions or comments. I can be reached at (508) 389-6355. I thank you in advance for your continued interest and participation.

Let's hope for great weather and plenty of eagles! As always, I will look forward to hearing about what you find.

Sincerely,

Thomas W. French, Ph.D.
Assistant Director

Enclosure (s)

Assigned Area: Same as last year