

BALD EAGLES ON THE BRUDENELL RIVER

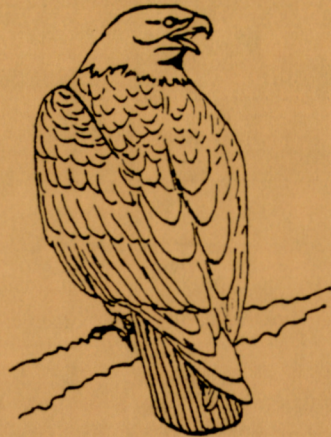
by Clare Martin (Stanhope, P.E.I.)

On August 2, 1979, while canoeing up the Brudenell River, I sighted a Bald Eagle perched in a tall spruce tree. A few days later and further up river I saw what was probably the same bird.

Bald Eagles have been known to use the area since at least the 1960's when a pair resided in Brudenell Provincial Park. Their nest, in top of a white pine tree, afforded the eagles an excellent view of the Brudenell River as well as the eleventh tee of the Park's golf course. In 1969, the male disappeared and was thought to have been shot. Over the years the old nest blew down and was not reconstructed. Meanwhile the female returned alone each year to summer along the Brudenell River. In 1978 she came back with a new mate. Together they constructed a new nest and raised two young. Another nest was built in 1979, this one occupied by three young. The whereabouts of the new nesting area has not been disclosed by the Fish and Wildlife Division since officials there wish to minimize disturbance at the nest and protect the eagles from the fate of the male in 1969.

Bald Eagles are large birds which can be identified by their size (male wingspan is 6 to 7 feet; female wing span is 6.5 to 7.5 feet). Both sexes are marked by pure white colouring of the head, neck, tail and upper tail coverts on an otherwise brown body.

Bald Eagles usually live near rivers, lakes and sea coasts where they feed on items, mostly fish, cast up on the shore. Nests are typically built in tree tops and are constructed of sticks of various sizes. They are used from year to year, with new material being added annually. As a result, nests may become quite large after a few years of use.



The status of the Bald Eagle on Prince Edward Island is rare (i.e. 1 to 5 sightings per season), even though the Island is now being used as a breeding place. Like many Islanders, the Brudenell Bald Eagles may feel that P.E.I. is a good place for "kids" to grow up.