# **Eagle’s World**

**But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;**

**they shall mount up with wings as eagles;**

**they shall run and not be weary;**

**and they shall walk and not faint.**

***(Isaiah 40:31)***

**Since the 18th century, the bald eagle has adorned government seals, medals, and currency, standing for integrity, vigilance, and strength. And for most of that time Americans have subjected the birds to slander, torture, and mass slaughter. (Nathaniel Rich, in *The Atlantic* magazine)**

**Two ministers died and went to heaven. St. Peter greeted them and said, “Your condos aren’t ready yet. Until they’re finished, you can return to earth as anything you want.” “Fine,” said the first minister. “I’ve always wanted to be an eagle soaring over the Grand Canyon.” “And I’d like to be a real cool stud,” said the second. Poof! Their wishes were granted. When the condos were finished St. Peter asked an assistant to bring back the two ministers. “How will I find them?” the assistant asked. “One is soaring over the Grand Canyon,” St. Peter replied. “The other may be tough to locate. He’s somewhere in Detroit – on a snow tire.” (Donna S. Tipton, in Reader’s Digest)**

**The “bald” in “bald eagle” is short for “piebald,” meaning black and white. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The heights and recesses of Mount Taurus are said to be much infested with eagles, who are never better pleased than when they pick the bones of a crane. Cranes are prone to cackle and make a noise and particularly so while they are flying. The sound of their voices arouses the eagles, who spring up at the signal, and often make the talkative travelers pay dearly for their impudent chattering. The older and more experienced cranes, sensible of their besetting foible and the peril to which it exposes them, take care before venturing on the wing to pick up a stone large enough to fill the cavity of their mouths, and consequently to impose unavoidable silence on their tongues, and thus they escape the danger. (Paul Lee Tan, in Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations)**

**An etymological debate about whether bald refers to the whiteness of the eagle’s head, its piebald coloring, or the word’s secondary definition as “brazen” also ends without verdict. (Nathaniel Rich, in *The Atlantic* magazine)**

**Bald eagles are unusually devoted spouses and parents. They mate for life and tend not to move homes unless forced to, which makes them easy marks for hunters. Their tendency to hatch only two eaglets per clutch made them especially vulnerable to egg snatchings (for centuries a popular pastime in both Europe and North America) and, after World War II, to DDT pollution, which degraded their eggshells. (Nathaniel Rich, in *The Atlantic* magazine)**

**Heart: “Ben Franklin thought our national bird should have been the turkey. He said that the bald eagle was lazy and cowardly. The turkey, he said, was a true native of America, a bird known for its bravery and intellect.” Friend: “Ben Franklin was a genius, but he didn’t know much about advertising.” *(Mark Tatullli, in Heart of the City comic strip)***

**By the beginning of the 20th century, balds had gone missing in so much of the country that Americans believed the species was native to the Rocky Mountains – perhaps one of the higher peaks, up in the clouds. (Nathaniel Rich, in *The Atlantic* magazine)**

**Two eagles mate for life, true. But when one dies, the survivor certainly doesn’t go into mourning. It finds a new partner before the next season. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Eagle Repository, the legally designated morgue for every dead eagle in the nation, distributes feathers, heads, and entire corpses to various native American tribes for use in ceremonies. (Nathaniel Rich, in *The Atlantic* magazine)**

**When Napoleon’s eagle eye flashed down the list of officers proposed for promotion to generals, he used to scribble in the margin of a name, “Is he lucky?” *(Axel Munthe, in The Story of San Michele)***

**What countries besides the United States have used the eagle as the national symbol? Ancient Rome, Austrian Empire and Nazi Germany. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Where do these birds build their nests? Bald eagles usually create homes in the highest branches of trees. They often use the same nest year after year, adding more twigs to it. One nest was used 34 years in a row and weighed 2 tons – as much as a truck! *(Jessica Mueller, in Frontier magazine)***

**Until the middle of the 20th century, the bald eagle received no federal protective designation. The idea would have seemed absurd: The species offered humanity no appreciable benefits. Eagles competed with hunters for small game and tormented livestock. They were treated, therefore, like rats, wolves, or any other nuisance animals. Americans killed them indiscriminately. (Nathaniel Rich, in *The Atlantic* magazine)**

**In the earliest years of the American republic, the most significant objection to using the bird as a national symbol came from Benjamin Franklin (in private correspondence, he argued that the turkey was “much more respectable”. (Nathaniel Rich, in *The Atlantic* magazine)**

**At the Fort Worth Zoo my husband and I were observing a pair of bald eagles when a group of school children approached. “Look!” one girl exclaimed. “It’s the bird on Mommy’s credit card!” *(Cindy Gayle, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Every three hours an alarm clock signaled the eagles to rotate the eggs to prevent the embryos from sticking to the shells. In the wild, the parents would have gently turned the eggs with their beaks. *(Mark Walters, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Bad week for: Catch 22s, after the heirs of art dealer Ileana Sonnabend inherited Canyon, a sculpture by Robert Rauschenberg. Because the sculpture contains a stuffed bald eagle, federal law bars its sale, but the IRS valued it at $65 million and is demanding the heirs pay $29.2 million in taxes. *(The Week magazine, August 3, 2012)***

**Eagles see better than humans on clear days; humans see better than eagles on foggy days. *(Uncle John’s Best Bathroom Reader, p. 104)***

**The eagle also can soar effortlessly for hours on rising thermals, without ever flapping its wings. Besides this ability to soar is a body that seems almost lighter than air. All its bones are hollow, and its entire skeleton weighs only half as much as the eagle’s 7000 or so feathers. (Mark Walters, in Reader's Digest)**

**The symbolism that had threatened to doom the bird saved it in the end. Activists learned that Americans who cared for nonhuman life could be convinced that the indiscriminate slaughter of the national symbol was as distasteful as burning the American flag. (Nathaniel Rich, in *The Atlantic* magazine)**

**For generations the eagle was a familiar – and thrilling – sight. The great bird can weigh 15 pounds, have a wingspan of seven feet, and live up to 30 years in the wild and 50 years in captivity. *(Mark Walters, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Two park rangers on patrol in central Norway’s Lierne region witnessed the unprecedented sight of an eagle swooping down and carrying off a bear cub nearly half of the bird’s weight. The rangers told public broadcaster NRK that the cub had been trotting along behind its mother before being snatched. Experts earlier said that bears have no natural predators. Torgeir Nygaard of the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research said the chances of an eagle snatching a bear were about as unlikely as “finding snow in the Sahara.” (Universal Press Syndicate, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, May 3, 2004)**

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