



## **The Golden Eagle, 2nd ed.**

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**The Golden Eagle, 2nd ed.**—Jeff Watson. 2011. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut. 448 pp., color plates, 72 tables, 82 figures. ISBN 9780300170191. Hardcover, \$65.00.—The second edition of *The Golden Eagle* is an update of Jeff Watson's first book of the same name that was published in 1997. The second edition was released 3 years after Watson's untimely death in 2007. A team of Watson's friends and relatives took on the task of completing the edition that Watson was working on until his death.

Watson's first edition of *The Golden Eagle* brought together diverse sources of data to produce a comprehensive treatise on the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). It was the first attempt to assemble existing scientific information on the widely distributed species in a single volume (see review of the first edition; Steenhof 1998).

The new edition, published by Yale University in the United States and T. & A.D. Poyser in the United Kingdom, has a different cover illustration and is in a smaller format (24 × 16 cm instead of 26 × 20 cm). As in the earlier edition, illustrations are by Keith Brockie and the author's father Donald Watson. Brockie's illustrations appear a bit crisper in the smaller format than in the first edition. The second edition has more color plates than the earlier edition and includes photographs that were not in the earlier edition. Tables are interspersed with the text instead of at the end of the text as in the previous edition.

The new edition has 30 pages of introductory material, including a preface, an introduction, acknowledgments, reflections by the author's surviving wife and son, and a foreword by Ian Newton. These pages document the process of creating the second edition and constitute a virtual "who's who" in eagle biology throughout the world. The book has the same 22 chapters with the same titles and in the same order as the first edition. Each chapter now begins with a quotation from an eagle researcher or a literary reference. The running head of the right-hand page now shows the chapter title, whereas the first edition showed the chapter subsection title. Each chapter has a section on other species of *Aquila*. As in the first edition, Watson emphasizes the Scottish population that he knows best.

In the preface written only 3 weeks before his death, Watson stated that much new research had been done since 1997, and questions that he posed in the first edition have been addressed in the second. Indeed, 240 of the references in Watson's 35-page bibliography are dated 1997 or later. Some of the additional information throughout the new edition is based on unpublished data from Todd Katzner and Mike McGrady, two of Watson's colleagues who helped complete the volume. The chapter on "Ranging Behaviour"

has considerable new material, reflecting recent research in Scotland. There is also some new information on postfledging dispersal patterns from recent telemetry studies. The section on taxonomy has been expanded to include recent genetic analyses, and the chapter on “Population Estimates and Trends” has been updated. There is an expanded section on electrocution and collisions with wires and wind turbines in the chapter on “Mortality.” The chapter on “Threats” also includes new information on electrocutions and wind farms. New information on lead poisoning appears in both the “Mortality” and “Threats” chapters, reflecting recent concerns and evidence that has accumulated since 1997. The “Threats” chapter also has a new, albeit short, section on climate change. Watson expanded the chapter on “Conservation” on the basis of his 10 years as Director of Operations for the Scottish National Heritage agency (SNH). The chapter now contains a relatively detailed overview of the Conservation Framework for Golden Eagles, commissioned by SNH.

Some chapters, however, have very few changes: sometimes merely a sentence added to the end of a paragraph. For example, the chapter on “Nest Spacing and Density” was virtually unchanged from the first edition. Most of the tables and figures are identical to those in the first edition. Only 8 of the 84 figures are new, and only 11 of the original 76 have updates, corrections, or modifications. Unfortunately, the shading modifications to Figure 7 make it more difficult to distinguish some categories than in the first edition. Three of the new figures have been redrawn from articles published in journals, and three display unpublished data from colleagues. Two others display the conservation status of Golden Eagles in Scotland. Similarly, only 4 of the 72 tables are new. One of the new tables is based on a recently published journal article, and two list the conservation status of eagles and protected areas in Scotland. The new table on dispersal dates of juvenile Scottish eagles (Table 17, page 134) would have been more useful if it also had reported dispersal ages. Thirteen tables have been updated or modified. Many of the changes are minor, addressing only taxonomic changes (e.g., splitting the Imperial Eagle [now *A. heliaca* and *A. adalberti*] and renaming the Black Eagle as Verreaux’s Eagle [*A. verreauxii*]). Fortunately, the table on population status has extensive updates. Five tables from the first edition

about diet are in the second edition as appendices and follow the same six appendices that were in the first edition.

In the 2002 *Birds of North America* account on Golden Eagles (Kochert et al. 2002), we reported that Watson (1997) had erred in his calculation of winter Golden Eagle densities in the western United States. Watson converted data reported by Boeker (1974) incorrectly and erroneously reported the data as being obtained by aerial rather than ground surveys. We corresponded with Watson about this. Unfortunately, the error was not corrected in the second edition, and the numbers reported on page 163 were exactly the same as those in the first edition. Most of the other errors that I found in the first edition were corrected in the second. However, I found several errors in the second edition, including misspelled names in the text and bibliography, incorrect headings, and inconsistent bibliographic format. The writing style could have been crisper and more streamlined. I assume that the apparently incomplete and uneven editing reflects Watson’s untimely death and the involvement of multiple editors.

Watson does not hide his passion for eagles or his outrage at eagle persecution in this book. He was a sentimental and unapologetic advocate for eagle conservation. Nevertheless, this is a scholarly compendium of information. This new edition, like the first, will be an important reference for both serious students and naive readers.—KAREN STEENHOF, *Owyhee Desert Studies*, 18109 Briar Creek Road, Murphy, Idaho 83650, USA. E-mail: [steenhof@hughes.net](mailto:steenhof@hughes.net).

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