



## BALD EAGLE BREEDING POPULATION STATUS

November 2019

In the spring of 2019, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife completed its annual bald eagle nesting survey. The survey consists of flying five blocks that are roughly ten square miles each and looking for eagle nests in woodlots and along rivers. Two of the blocks, which are located around Sandusky Bay (Ottawa/Sandusky Counties) on Lake Erie and Mosquito Creek Wildlife Area (Trumbull County) in northeastern Ohio, are flown every year while the other three are rotated every year. In 2019, the other three blocks were located around Big Island Wildlife Area (Marion County), in Portage County, and along the Muskingum River (Muskingum County). The survey is initially conducted in March, to search for nests when eagles are incubating eggs. A follow-up survey is done in May to determine the number of young produced in active nests.

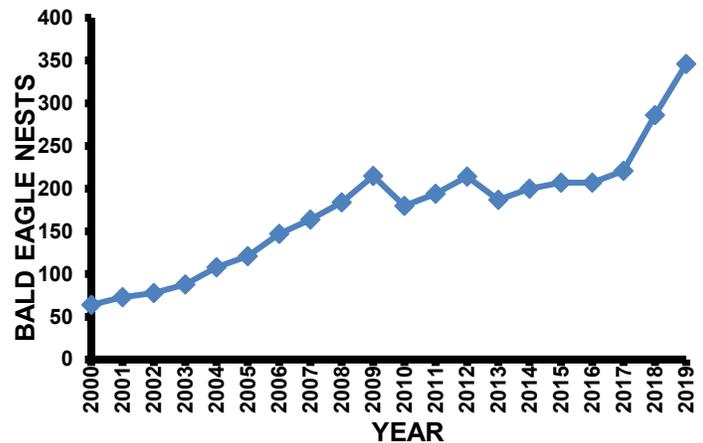


Figure 1. Estimated number of bald eagle nests in Ohio, 2000-2019.

Biologists calculated, based on the survey of the sample areas, that there were approximately 346 eagle nests within the state, which was an increase of nearly 22% from 286 nests in 2018 (Figure 1). In addition, this is well above the five-year average estimate of 253 nests per year. The number of young, estimated at 497 this year, was also a substantial increase above the estimate of 445 young in 2018.

After several years of relatively low population increase, the past two years' high rates of increase of between 20-30% is somewhat surprising. In recent years the breeding population seemed to have stabilized, with only an average 5% increase over the past 10 years. Clearly, the bald eagle population is thriving in Ohio, and it remains to be seen if the recent large increases reflect a persistent trend or if the population will soon stabilize. As a result of this success, management by the division remains minimal, with primary duties including working with rehabilitators that help injured birds recover, and helping to enforce protective state and federal laws, such as the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.