

Species Status Assessment

Common Name: Golden Eagle **Date Updated:** March 3, 2025
Scientific Name: *Aquila chrysaetos* **Updated By:** MDP
Class: Aves
Family: Accipitridae

Species Synopsis

(a short paragraph which describes species taxonomy, distribution, recent trends, and habitat in New York):

The golden eagle is extirpated as a breeder in New York, with the last known successful nesting occurring in 1970. Summer records occur occasionally and there are some, regularly-used wintering areas. Numbers of migrating individuals at the hawk watches at Derby Hill, Braddock Bay, and Franklin Mountain have been increasing since the 1980s.

The golden eagle inhabits a wide range of latitudes throughout the Northern Hemisphere and uses a variety of habitats ranging from arctic to desert. It historically nested throughout North America (Bent 1937) but is now more common in western states (west of the 100th meridian). Breeding territories in the northeast U.S. are no longer known to be occupied (Katzner et al. 2023). Golden eagles nest on rugged land features in open country, placing the nest on cliffs or bluffs.

I. Status

a. Current legal protected Status

i. Federal: **Candidate:**
ii. New York: Endangered

b. Natural Heritage Program

i. Global: G5
ii. New York: SHB.S1N **Tracked by NYNHP?** On Active Tracking List

Other Ranks:

New York 2025 SGCN status: Species of Greatest Conservation Need
COSEWIC: Not listed in Canada

IUCN Red List: Least Concern
 Northeast Regional SGCN: RSGCN

Status Discussion:

II. Abundance and Distribution Trends

Region	Present?	Abundance	Distribution	Time Frame	Listing status or S-Rank	SGCN?
North America	Yes	Increasing	Unknown	BBS 1966-2022 trend for US		
Northeastern US	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		RSGCN
New York	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	E	
Connecticut	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	SNA	
Massachusetts	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	S1N	
New Jersey	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	S4N	
Pennsylvania	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	S5N,S4M	
Vermont	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	SNA	
Ontario	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	S1B,S4N	
Quebec	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	S3B	

Column options

Present?: Yes; No; Unknown; No data; (blank) or Choose an Item

Abundance and Distribution: Declining; Increasing; Stable; Unknown; Extirpated; N/A; (blank) or Choose an item

SGCN?: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Monitoring in New York

(specify any monitoring activities or regular surveys that are conducted in New York):

Trends Discussion

(insert map of North American/regional distribution and status):

Breeding range map for Golden Eagle

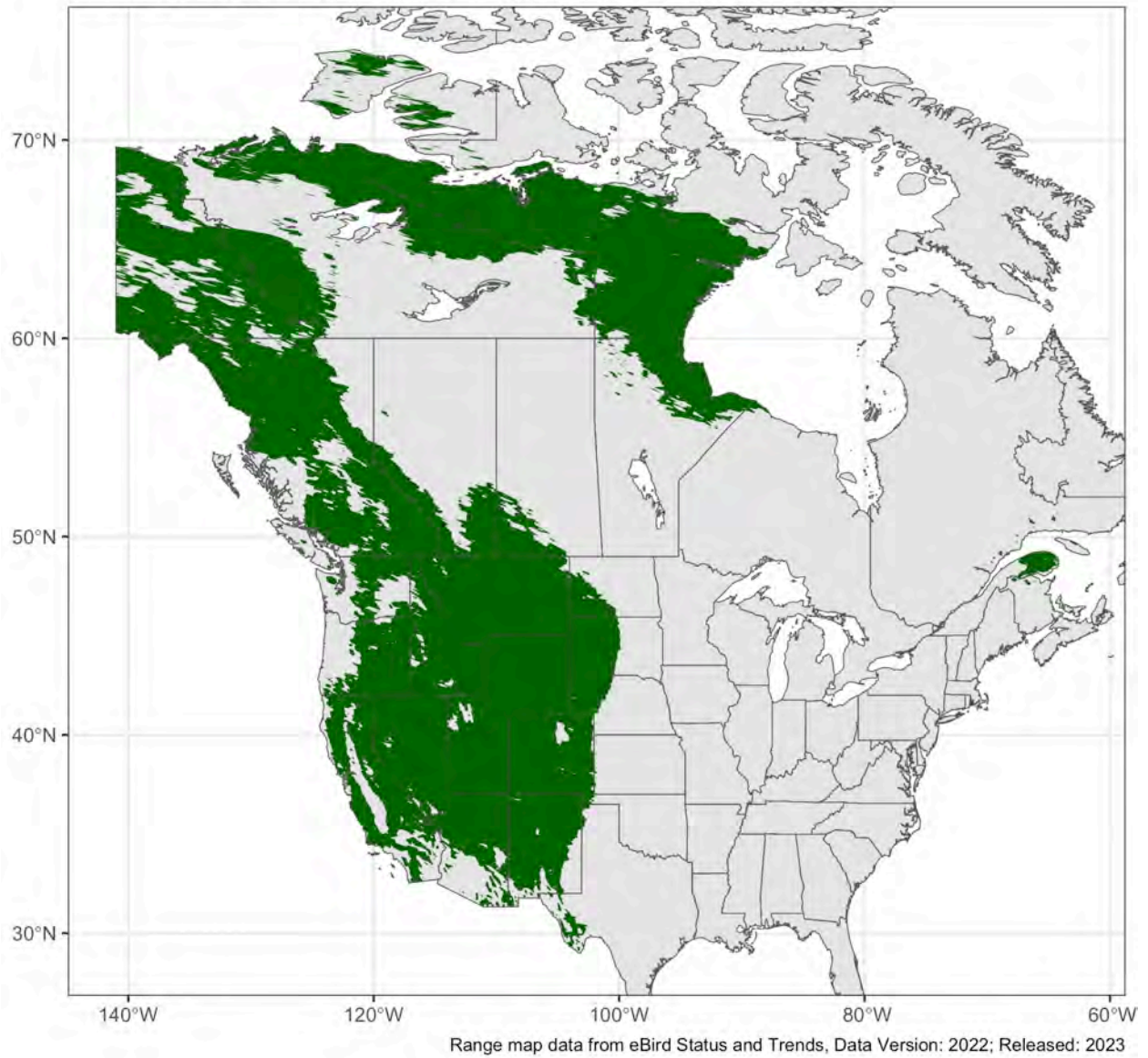
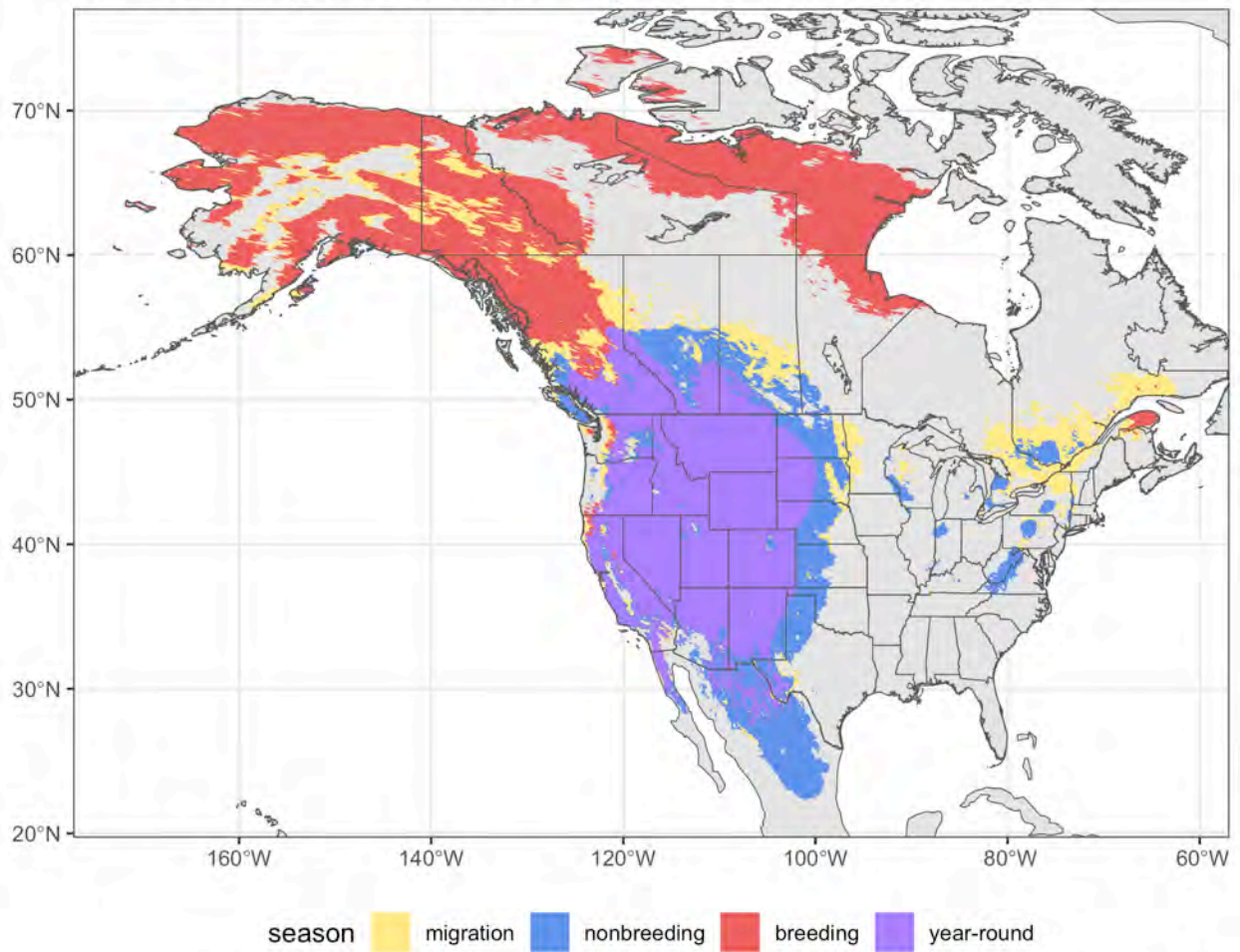


Figure 1: Breeding range for golden eagle (eBird).

Year-round range map for Golden Eagle



Range map data from eBird Status and Trends, Data Version: 2022; Released: 2023

Figure 2: Full (year-round) range for golden eagle (eBird).

Golden Eagle state-level breeding trends 2012-2022

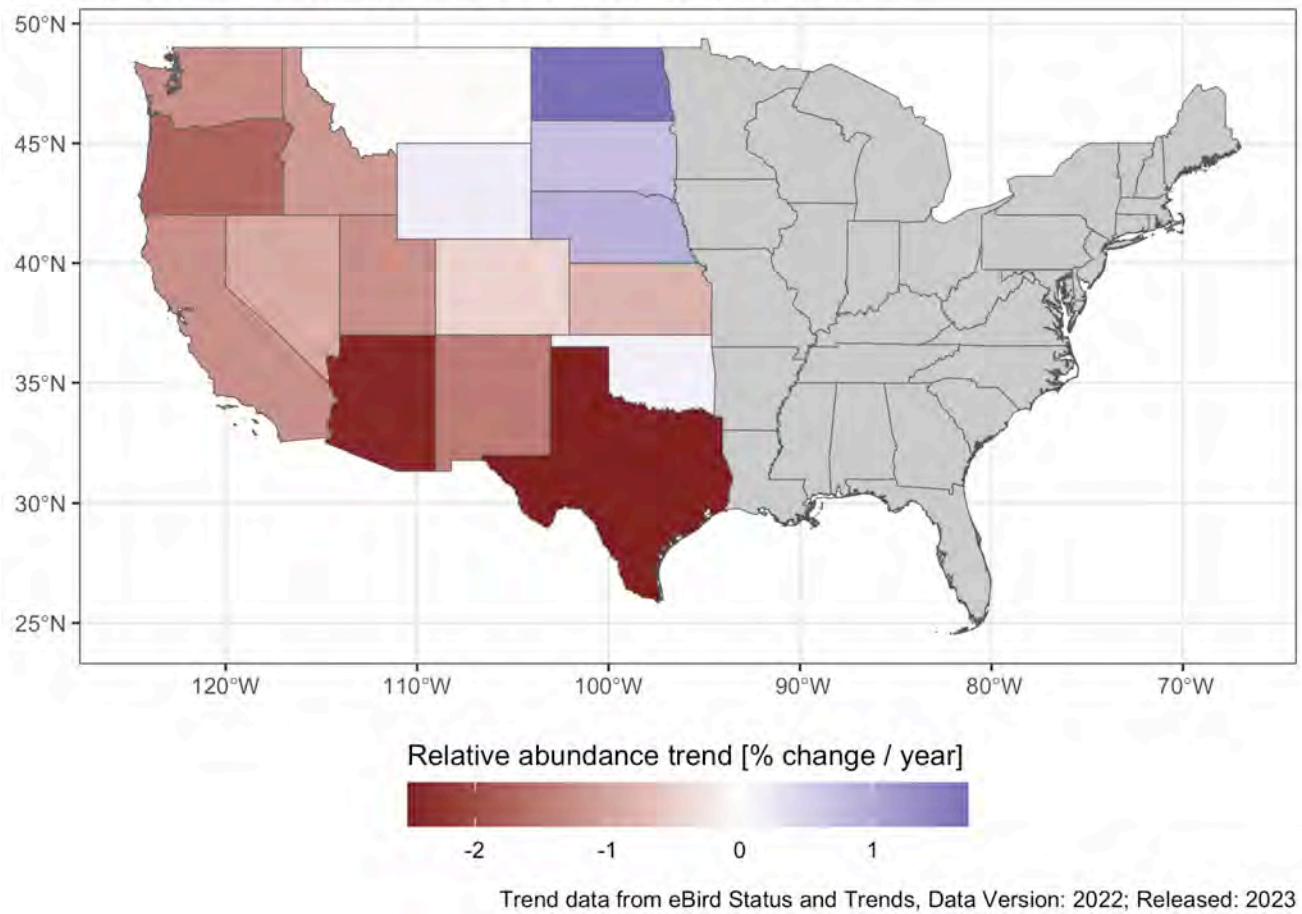


Figure 3: Trends, by state, for golden eagle (ebird).

III. New York Rarity

(provide map, numbers, and percent of state occupied)

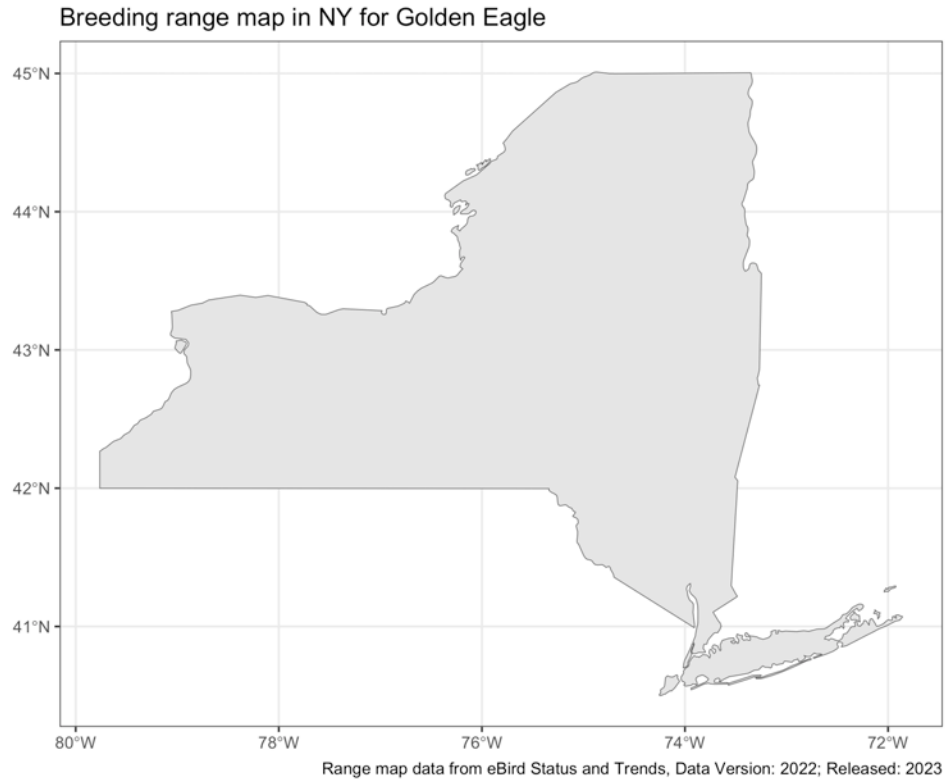


Figure 4: NYS breeding range for golden eagle (eBird).

Details of historic and current occurrence:

The first Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) (1980-85) documented occupancy in 8 blocks, 0.1% of the survey blocks statewide (Andrle and Carroll 1988). The second BBA (2000-05) documented occupancy in 9 blocks, 0.2% of the survey blocks statewide (McGowan and Corwin 2008).

The third BBA (2020-25) is currently underway and utilizes a different number and layout of survey blocks across New York, making direct comparison with the first two Atlases difficult. There were 5,333 blocks in the first and second BBAs, and there are 5,710 blocks in the current BBA, of which 1,815 are considered priority blocks. To date, golden eagle has been documented in 2 priority blocks, 0.1% of all priority blocks statewide during the third BBA (NY BBA III Overview, 2024).

New York’s Contribution to Species North American Range:

Percent of North American Range in NY	Classification of NY Range	Distance to core population, if not in NY
1-25%		

Column options

Percent of North American Range in NY: 100% (endemic); 76-99%; 51-75%; 26-50% 1-25%; 0%; Choose an item

Classification of NY Range: Core; Peripheral; Disjunct; (blank) or Choose an item

IV. Primary Habitat or Community Type

(from NY crosswalk of NE Aquatic, Marine, or Terrestrial Habitat Classification Systems):

NatureServe broad habitat types: Woodland - Conifer, Grassland/herbaceous, Savanna, Desert, Alpine, Woodland - Mixed, Cliff, Woodland - Hardwood, Tundra

NY Natural Heritage Communities: Acidic talus slope woodland, Boreal heath barrens, Cliff community

Habitat or Community Type Trend in New York

Habitat Specialist?	Indicator Species?	Habitat/ Community Trend	Time frame of Decline/ Increase
Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Column options

Habitat Specialist and Indicator Species: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item.

Habitat/Community Trend: Declining; Stable; Increasing; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item.

Habitat Discussion:

The Golden Eagle prefers wild, remote mountainous areas with open habitat where small game is abundant, and cliffs are available for nesting (Andrle and Carroll 1988). Most of the historical nests in New York were placed on inaccessible cliff ledges with a protective overhang. One nest in the Adirondacks was placed 90 feet above the ground in a large White Pine tree. The pair may have several alternate nests and may use the same nest in consecutive years or shift to an alternate nest within their vast hundred square mile territory (Spofford 1971a).

Golden eagles generally inhabit open and semi-open country such as prairies, sagebrush, arctic and alpine tundra, savannah or sparse woodland, and barren areas, especially in hilly or mountainous regions, in areas with sufficient mammalian prey base and near suitable nesting sites. In Nevada, the only habitats routinely avoided by golden eagles are forests, large agricultural areas, and urban areas (GBBO 2010). Nests are most often on rock ledges of cliffs but sometimes in large trees (e.g., oak or eucalyptus in California, white pine in eastern North America), on steep hillsides, or on the ground. Nesting cliffs may face any direction and may be close to or distant from water. In Elko County, Nevada, 93 percent of nests were on cliffs, 71 percent were at elevations between 5,000 feet and 6,500 feet, and 43 percent faced east; 84 percent of nests were within two miles of water with desert riparian habitat (Page and Seibert 1973). A pair may have multiple alternate nests; the pair may use the same or alternate nests in consecutive years.

IUCN habitat description:

This is the most widespread of the Aquila eagles, ranging across the Nearctic and Palearctic (70°N to 20°S), and fringing Indomalaya and the Afrotropics. It is uncommon to scarce across its range. In general, the species is sedentary, with juveniles dispersing as far as 1000km in their first few years. Birds occupying the mostly northerly regions (>65°N), such as Alaska, northern Canada, Fennoscandia and northern Russia, migrate south. In the Nearctic there are

southwards movements to southern Alaska and southwest USA in September, via regular flyways, in particular through southwest Alberta. In the Palearctic, movements occur in a broad front to wintering areas in southeast Europe, the Russian steppes, Mongolia, northern China and Japan. Juveniles and immatures will go as far as North Africa (Ferguson-Lees and Christie, 2001). The species occupies a wide range of flat or mountainous, largely open habitats, often above the tree line, from sea level to 4000m. In the Himalayas it has been recorded as high as 6200m (Watson, 2010). The species's diet is very broad, taking mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians, insects and carrion variously, depending on the regional prey availability. Prey taken are usually 0.5-4.0 kg and the species can hunt in pairs or small groups (Ferguson-Lees and Christie, 2001). Nesting occurs on cliff ledges and where these are not available, in large trees or similar artificial structures. In central and southeastern Mongolia, birds regularly nest on the ground (Ellis 2020). Nests are constructed from sticks and are added to in successive years, growing to 2 m in diameter. The breeding season spans March – August throughout the majority of its range, and in southern areas begins as early as November; whilst in the most northerly regions it will start as late as April (Ferguson-Lees and Christie, 2001).

V. Species Demographics and Life History

Breeder in NY?	Non-breeder in NY?	Migratory Only?	Summer Resident?	Winter Resident?	Anadromous/Catadromous?
Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No

Column options

First 5 fields: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item.

Anadromous/Catadromous: Anadromous; Catadromous; (blank) or Choose an item.

Species Demographics and Life History Discussion

(include information about species life span, reproductive longevity, reproductive capacity, age to maturity, and ability to disperse and colonize):

VI. Threats

Threat Level 1	Threat Level 2	Threat Level 3	Spatial Extent	Severity	Immediacy	Trend	Certainty
1. Residential and Commercial	1.1 Housing & Urban Areas	-	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
3. Energy Production & Mining	3.3 Renewable Energy	3.3.2 Wind farms	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
4. Transportation & Service Corridors	4.1 Roads & Railroads	-	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
4. Transportation & Service Corridors	4.2 Utility & Service Lines	4.2.1 Power & service lines	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
5. Biological Resource Use	5.1 Hunting & Collecting Terrestrial Animals	5.1.4 Poaching/persecution of terrestrial animals	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
6. Human Intrusions & Disturbance	6.1 Recreational Activities	6.1.3 Recreational use of cliffs and rock faces	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
7. Natural System Modifications	7.3 Other Ecosystem Modifications	7.3.2 Vegetation succession	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Table 1. Threats to golden eagle.

Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?

Yes: ✓ **No:** **Unknown:**

If yes, describe mechanism and whether adequate to protect species/habitat:

This species is included in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. 703-712) and is protected as a native species under the NYS Environmental Conservation Law. It also receives additional protections as a species listed as Endangered in New York State.

Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:

Table 3. Recommended conservation actions for *golden eagle*.

Action Category	Action	Description
C.10 Institutional Development	C.10.2.0.0 External support and organizational development	Alliance and Partnership Development (support and participate in international golden eagle conservation efforts).
B.3 Outreach	B.3.1.4.0 Public outreach and information	Awareness & Communications (educational materials)
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.5.0.0 Conservation planning	-Resource/Habitat Protection
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.2.2.0 Acquire title for conservation purposes	-Site/Area protection (acquisition)
C.6 Design and Plan Conservation	C.6.2.3.1 Conservation easements	-Site/Area protection (easements)

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This SSA drew heavily from these resources:

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