

Indiana bald eagle recovery huge success

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Indiana environmental experts say the Hoosier State is now home to 200 of the nation's bald eagles, just 21 years after they were considered nearly extinct.

State officials say there are now 68 active nests, six more than last year and the most in at least a century, with a total of 91 chicks, The Indianapolis Star reported Tuesday. Before the recovery program began in 1985, the birds had not nested in Indiana since 1897.

The species' decline to fewer than 500 nesting pairs in the lower 48 states by the late 1960s is blamed on hunting, deforestation and the now-banned pesticide DDT.

When Indiana began raising newly hatched eagle chicks from Wisconsin and Alaska, state officials hoped there would be five nesting pairs by 2000, the Star said. Instead, there were 24 pairs by that time and since then the number has nearly tripled.

The bald eagle has also recovered across the rest of the nation. With an estimated 7,700 nesting pairs now counted, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service plans to remove bald eagles from the federal Endangered Species List next year.

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