

Bald eagles may no longer be endangered

February 1 2007

Experts say bald eagles are likely to be taken from the endangered species list as the U.S. government's Feb. 16 deadline for ruling on the birds approaches.

The deadline, set by a federal judge in an August 2006 lawsuit, forces the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to rule on the status of the birds, which most experts say recovered from low numbers years ago, the Sacramento Bee reported Thursday.

The suit, brought by the conservative Pacific Legal Foundation in Sacramento, aimed to combat what the group describes as abuse of the federal Endangered Species Act.

"The Endangered Species Act is a statute which has tremendously long and sharp teeth," the group's President Rob Rivett told the Bee. "We haven't been striving to delist the bald eagle. We've been striving to make sure the Endangered Species Act is enforced correctly and is not misused."

If the birds are delisted, they will remain protected by the 1940 Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which made it illegal to "disturb" the birds.

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Citation: Bald eagles may no longer be endangered (2007, February 1) retrieved 24 April 2024

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