



# A Gathering of Eagles



When the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources began a Bald Eagle Restoration Project in 1984, Bald Eagles had not successfully nested in Alabama since 1949. Thanks to these restoration efforts, Bald Eagle populations increased and today they nest all across the state. Once in danger of extinction, Bald Eagles made a tremendous comeback, not only in Alabama, but all across the country.

In the fall, there is an influx of Bald Eagles into Alabama from northern states and Canada. These migrants spend the winter in Alabama enjoying moderate temperatures and ice-free waters before returning north in the spring.

Historically, Bald Eagles nested in Alabama's Tennessee Valley and the state's coastal region. The population dwindled in the 1950's and 1960's due mainly to the devastating effects of DDT poisoning. This chemical passes through the food chain by accumulating in fish, which in turn are eaten by eagles. DDT in the eagles caused eggshells to thin so that they broke during incubation and failed to hatch. The population plummeted, wintering eagles in Alabama became rare, and the breeding population completely died out.



### How Many Eagles Can You Find?

Bald Eagles patrol the waters of Waterloo year-round. Each year, these monogamous birds nest along Second Creek and can be seen hunting and tending to their young. However, the real spec-

tacle at Waterloo happens each winter when large groups of eagles congregate in the area. Check the exposed gravel banks for eagles in the early morning. During the middle of the day, groups of these majestic birds can be seen roosting along the river.



### Waterloo Sits at the Center of a Number of Excellent Birding Areas Worth Exploring Year-round.

- 1 Melton Hollow** - This area supports a nature trail and is excellent for woodland birds in the spring.
- 2 Brush Creek Park** - Check for nesting vireos and orioles near the boat ramp. Bald Eagles are seen regularly in the winter.
- 3 Second Creek Embayment** - Scan the water for mergansers, eagles, and rare gulls. Be sure to check the surrounding pines for wintering Red-breasted Nuthatches.
- 4 Waterloo** - Check the overlook at the south end of Main Street for ducks and eagles. The cedars here can provide exciting birding opportunities in the winter.
- 5 Lauderdale Wildlife Management Area** This wildlife management area is located just west of Waterloo and contains many types of habitat. Prairie Warblers and Yellow-breasted chats may be found in the fields. Check recent pine plantings for Bachman's Sparrow, which may nest in the area.