

# Rachel Carson Centennial

## A “Welcome Back” Party for Bald Eagles

In 1963, there were only 417 nesting pairs of bald eagles in the entire lower 48 states. Today, there are more than 9700 nesting pairs of bald eagles in the lower 48, and that number is growing every day. The publication of *Silent Spring*, combined with the habitat protections afforded by the Endangered Species Act set the stage for bald eagle populations to make a remarkable comeback.

Bringing back plants and animals from the brink of extinction takes a lot of hard work by many dedicated groups and individuals. In addition to Rachel Carson, there are hundreds of extraordinary people who have helped the bald eagle on its road to recovery. Government agencies, conservation groups, private landowners, and concerned citizens are also credited with the eagle’s success.

One group that has helped bald eagles and educated the public about the importance of conserving eagles and their habitat is the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Zoos all over the country help bald eagles through captive breeding programs, rehabilitation for injured birds, and education programs for people of all ages.

### Welcome Back Party

One great way to celebrate the legacy of Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring* on the recovery of our nation’s symbol is to host a “Welcome Back” party with an AZA institution that has captive eagles. Nothing makes more impact than live animals, and one way to teach youth and adults about the significance of DDT on bald eagles is to meet these majestic creatures face to face.

There are 74 AZA institutions across the country which have captive eagles to serve as the perfect setting for a

community celebration. Contact your local AZA zoo with eagles and arrange a community event to celebrate the recovery of the bald eagle. The list of zoos with eagles is available at [http://www.fws.gov/rachelcarson/resources/zoos\\_with\\_eagles.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/rachelcarson/resources/zoos_with_eagles.pdf)

The best way to make this activity a success is to have a youth group (i.e., classroom, Girls Scouts, Boy Scouts, etc.) host the “Welcome Back” party. Have the children invite their fellow students, scout troops or peers to the event and make special invitations with eagles on them. There are several projects students can create for the day of the event:

- Banner celebrating the recovery of the bald eagle
- Posters with information on the decline of the bald eagle
- Picture collages of bald eagles in their natural habitat
- Fact Sheet about how Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring* helped bald eagles
- Chart of the eagle population in their state

A good place for children to start compiling information on bald eagles is with the following webpages:

- <http://www.fws.gov/angered/>
- <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/BaldEagle.htm>
- <http://www.fws.gov/rachelcarson/>

An agenda for the event could include a Service biologist talking about bald eagle biology, eagle habitat, and the importance of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* to bald eagle recovery. Ask the

zoo to talk about what it takes to care for bald eagles in captivity and what other types of endangered species they conserve. Then you could have several students read poems, essays or testimonials about their experiences learning about bald eagles.

Just remember that too much time talking at a group of students at a zoo won’t last long. You’ll need to create a game or take a tour of the zoo.

For example, you could play the *Risky Critters!* game ([http://www.fws.gov/rachelcarson/resources/risky\\_critters\\_game.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/rachelcarson/resources/risky_critters_game.pdf))

Or have a coloring book activity for the younger kids (<http://www.epa.gov/espp/coloring/>)

Hosting a joint “Welcome Back” party provides a great partnership opportunity, makes a great story for local media and instills a sense of environmental stewardship in the next generation.

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