AUDIO

How climate change could hurt bald eagles

They've returned from the brink of extinction but face new threats.

by YCC TEAM
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Over the past 50 years, bald eagles in the U.S. have returned from the brink of extinction. Now, the birds perch on tree branches over rivers and lakes across much of the country.

But as the climate changes, eagles will face new challenges. For example, in some areas, more frequent droughts may threaten bodies of water that eagles depend on.

"If the area is becoming drier and if it affects its food resources such as fish in river systems then that's going to be a big problem for the species," says Brooke Bateman, senior scientist at the National Audubon Society.

Bateman says global warming may also bring extreme weather with damaging winds that can endanger nests and baby birds. In the South, extreme heat could threaten the birds' ability to reproduce.

Taking all these factors into account, the Audubon Society predicts that three-quarters of the bald eagles' current summer range will become unsuitable for the birds in about 60 years.

"A lot of their breeding is going to shift completely into Canada and Alaska. So the lower 48 is looking less ideal for breeding conditions for the species," Bateman says.

So as the climate changes, the national bird may find fewer places in the United States to call home.

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