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"The important argument for the proper lifesaving use of DDT should not be weakened by erroneous reports about eagles."

Environment News → March 2007



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DDT Did Not Harm Eagles

Written By: Jay Lehr, Ph.D.
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While it is wonderful that the bald eagle will be taken off the Endangered Species list, many media reports repeated the fiction that the ban on DDT use in the U.S. was a major factor in the species' recovery.

There is no scientific evidence that DDT had any negative impact on our national bird. To the contrary, DDT's elimination of disease-causing vermin helped virtually all bird populations, which is well documented by the National Audubon Society.

A brief history of the eagle population makes this clear. In 1941, before any DDT was used, 197 bald eagles were counted. In 1960, after 15 years of heavy DDT use, the count had risen to 891.

The prominent, late entomologist, Dr. J. Gordon Edwards, recorded more specific aspects in his last authoritative treatise on the subject, "Effects of DDT in Surface Water on Bird Abundance and Reproduction," featured in the Surface Water volume of the *Water Encyclopedia* (Wiley Interscience, 2004), a scientific anthology that I had the pleasure to edit.

The World Health Organization and others now recognize the need to bring back DDT in order to reduce deaths from malaria. The important argument for the proper lifesaving use of DDT should not be weakened by erroneous reports about eagles.

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