Expert Says It's Possible to Save Louisiana Eagles

But Hunters Must Take Care, He Cautions

(Ruston, La. -- A Louisiana Tech zoologist says that north Louisiana can still save its shrinking bald eagle population, but not unless area hunters take care to spare the big bird.

Dr. John Goertz, a widely-published researcher in the Ruston university's College of Life Sciences, said that bald eagles were once plentiful throughout Louisiana, but that herbicides, pesticides and hunters have taken a heavy toll of the bird.

In fact, Dr. Goertz said that the bald eagle, the nation's national symbol, is now an endangered species and that only a "relatively few" of the birds survive in this area.

Goertz said that the decline of the eagle is also a national trend, with the birds producing only about half the offspring needed to keep the species going indefinitely.

In this area, Ridley Duncan of the U.S. Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife Office in Shreveport said that recently two immature bald eagles, both of which were apparently shot, were reported to him.

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Goertz said that the 1940 Bald Eagle Act, amended in 1962 to include the golden eagle, provides for a $500 fine and or six months in jail for killing the bird.

"We can still have this great bird in north Louisiana," Goertz said, explaining that the area's big, man-made lakes provided a good habitat for the bald eagle.

"But unless hunters are more careful—and unless various environmental steps are taken—the whole species, in this area at least, could be wiped out," he said.

The Tech researcher said that students had seen a number of bald eagle nests in their field trips. The bald eagle, he said, can still be found, though in diminishing numbers, on most of north Louisiana's big lakes, from the Shreveport area across the state to Monroe.