

The American Bald Eagle Report 2011-2012



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Rock Island District

Compiled by
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March 2012



The American Bald Eagle: Natural History & Current Conditions

The bald eagle has proudly served as the emblem for the United States of America since 1782. As a symbol of our freedom, the eagle can be found on our national seal, coins, state flags, and postage stamps. The bald eagle has not had an easy history. In fact, as development continued to expand westward during the early 1900s, they were in danger of extinction. Humans out-competed the birds for food and destroyed much of their natural habitat. Consequently, in 1940, the Bald Eagle Act was passed, and numbers slowly began to improve. However, farmers were using an insecticide called DDT on their crops. This chemical was believed to poison the birds and cause them to produce unhealthy and fewer eggs.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service declared the bald eagle an endangered species in the United States on July 4, 1976.

Eventually, the use of DDT was banned, laws protecting their nesting trees were passed, and the eagles slowly began to recover. Due to increased protective measures and regulations, scientific and commercial data indicate that the bald eagle has recovered. Therefore, effective August 8, 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, delisted the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) in the lower 48 States of the United States from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife. Even though the bald eagle is delisted, it continues to be protected by other Federal laws: the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Lacey Act. The Endangered Species Act requires that the Secretary of Interior "implement a system in cooperation with the States to monitor effectively for not less than five years the status of all species which have recovered". This provision mandates a monitoring program for five years after delisting. The Service recommends monitoring of bald eagles for 20 years. The purpose of the monitoring program is to document bald eagle population health. If, during this monitoring period, there is a problem with our bald eagle population, the species could be quickly relisted under the Act. We continue to monitor the status of the bald eagle to ensure that numbers stay high.

During the winter months, eagles migrate south from their native habitats in Canada and the northernmost United States, such as Wisconsin, to regions along rivers and streams where they can obtain food in unfrozen waters. Specifically, these birds of prey focus their attention to

waters immediately below dams where the water never freezes, and they can have open access to the fish found there.

During the months of December, January, and February, the Rock Island District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducts a survey to monitor the presence of the American bald eagle. Eagles gather near open water during winter months to feed on fish. At 16 locks and dams along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, lock personnel take counts of the birds on a weekly basis. Then, those numbers are organized into this collaborative report, which can be used for research, recreation, and general knowledge. The data gathered for this report is distributed weekly to the public on the following website: <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/missriver/bedweb/BEW2.htm>. The US Army Corps of Engineers visitor centers along the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway get calls requesting information on locations where the eagles are most prevalent. This information assists travelers planning their trips to the Mississippi River Valley. When visitors come to see the eagles, it gives the Corps an opportunity to educate the public about its missions.



The results of this year's survey (2011-2012) are included in the following pages. Eagles continue to reside in the area outside of the described three-month period, but December through February is the primary season for their migration south.

Figure 1. Map of locks & dams along the Upper Mississippi River & Illinois Waterway where annual eagle counts take place—L/D 11-22 on Upper Mississippi River; Marseilles, Starved Rock, Peoria, & LaGrange L/D's on Illinois Waterway.



Summary of 2011-2012 Findings

In all, 3,550 eagles were sighted during the 2011-12 survey period. Total adults sightings were 2,745, juveniles were 701 and unknown 104. The total number of eagles counted this season was down from 2010-11. Total sightings on the Upper Mississippi River decreased from 4,838 (in 2010-11) to 3,437 (in 2011-12). Total sightings along the Illinois Waterway were down this year from 267 (in 2010-11) to 113 (in 2011-12).

The survey was conducted every Wednesday morning between the hours of 830-930 beginning the first week in December 2011 through the last week in February 2012.

Figure 2. Pie graph showing distribution of total eagle sightings at all locks & dams during 2011-12 season.

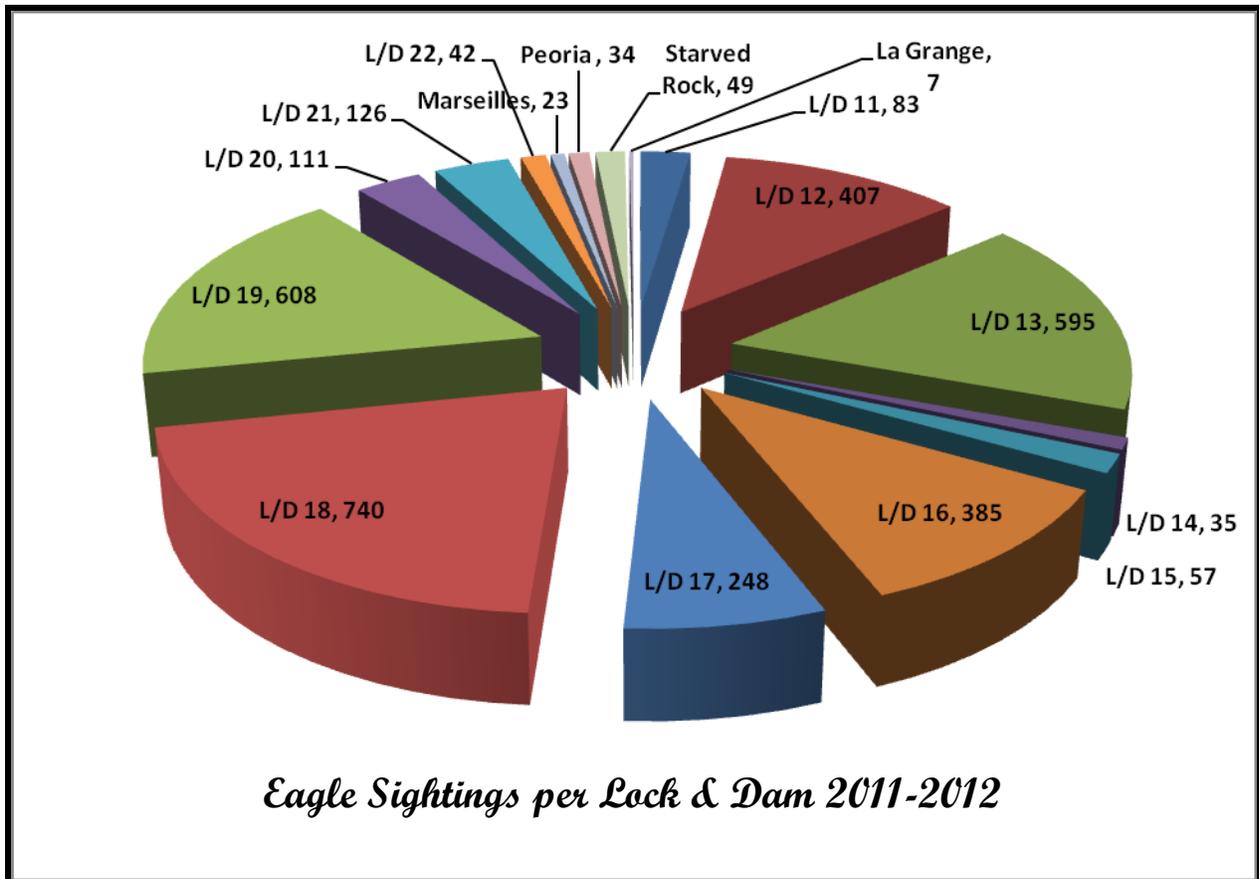


Table 1. Bald eagle sightings in the tail waters of **Upper Mississippi River** dams during the winter of 2008-09

Lock & Dam	Adults	Juveniles	Unknown	Total
L/D 11	73	10	0	83
L/D 12	274	133	0	407
L/D 13*	404	191	0	595
L/D 14+	29	4	2	35
L/D 15	48	9	0	57
L/D 16	344	41	0	385
L/D 17	203	45	0	248
L/D 18	639	101	0	740
L/D 19	417	103	88	608
L/D 20	83	14	14	111
L/D 21	102	24	0	126
L/D 22+	39	3	0	42
Total	2655	678	104	3437

^ Some data collected at other than standard time.

* Data not collected during one week of the sampling period

+ Data not collected during two weeks of the sampling period

~ Some data collected on other than standard day.

Table 2. Bald eagle sightings in the tail waters of the **Illinois Waterway** dams during the winter of 2008-09.

Lock & Dam	Adults	Juveniles	Unknown	Total
LaGrange/	7	0	0	7
Marseilles*	18	5	0	23
Peoria*	26	8	0	34
Starved Rock	39	10	0	49
Total	90	23	0	113

^ Some data collected at other than standard time.

* Data not collected during one week of the sampling period

+ Data not collected during two weeks of the sampling period.

/ Data not collected during 3 weeks of the sampling period.

Table 3. Bald eagle sightings in the tail waters of **both** the **Upper Mississippi River** and the **Illinois Waterway** dams during the winter of 2011-12.

Adults	Juveniles	Unknown	Total
2745	701	104	3550

Figure 3. Graph of total number of eagles sighted 1994-2009 season.

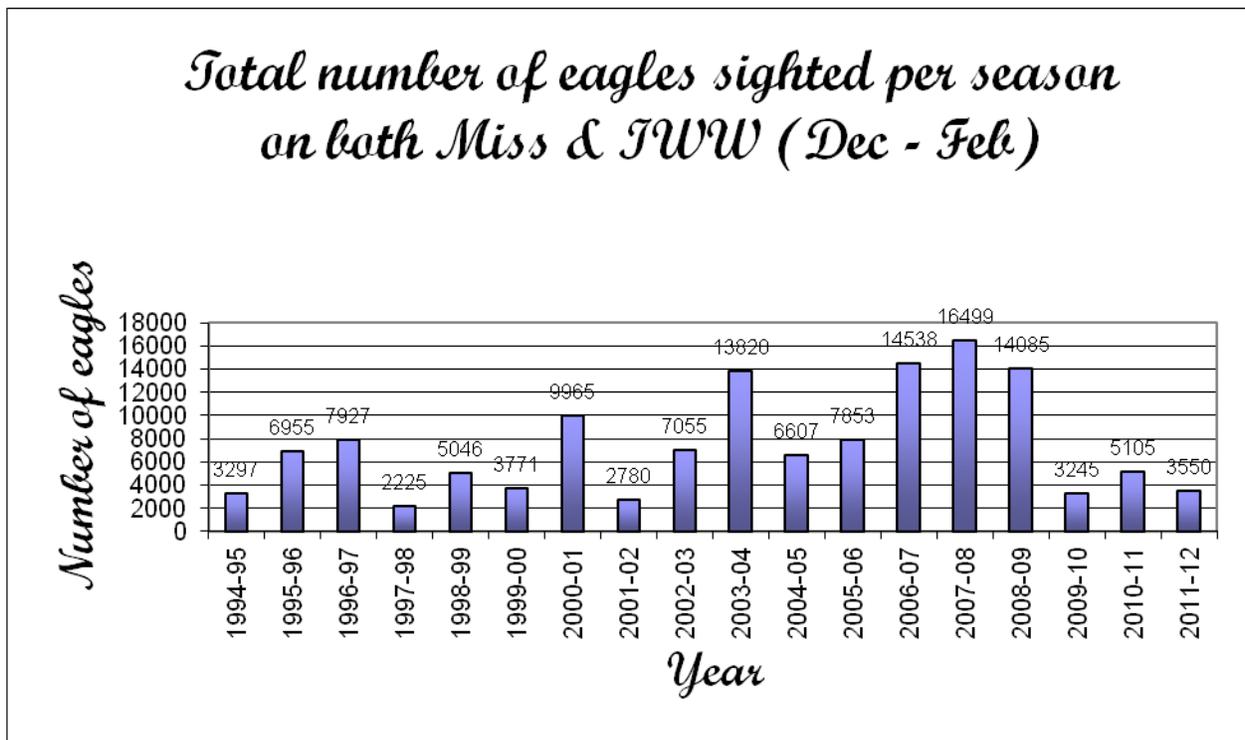
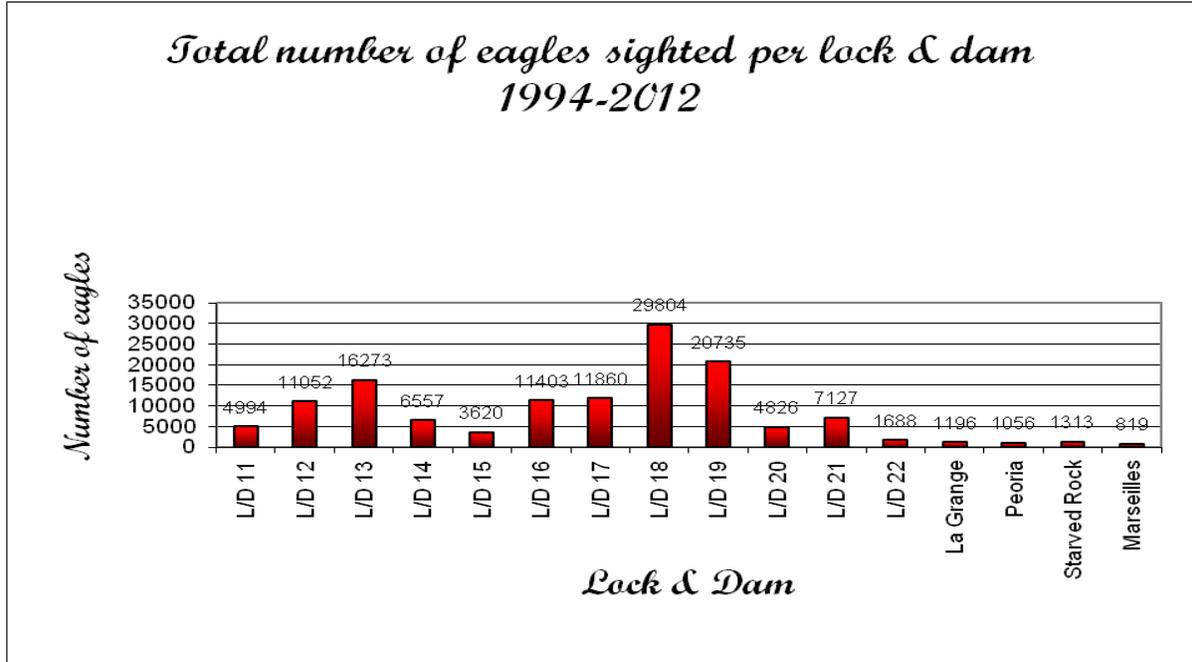
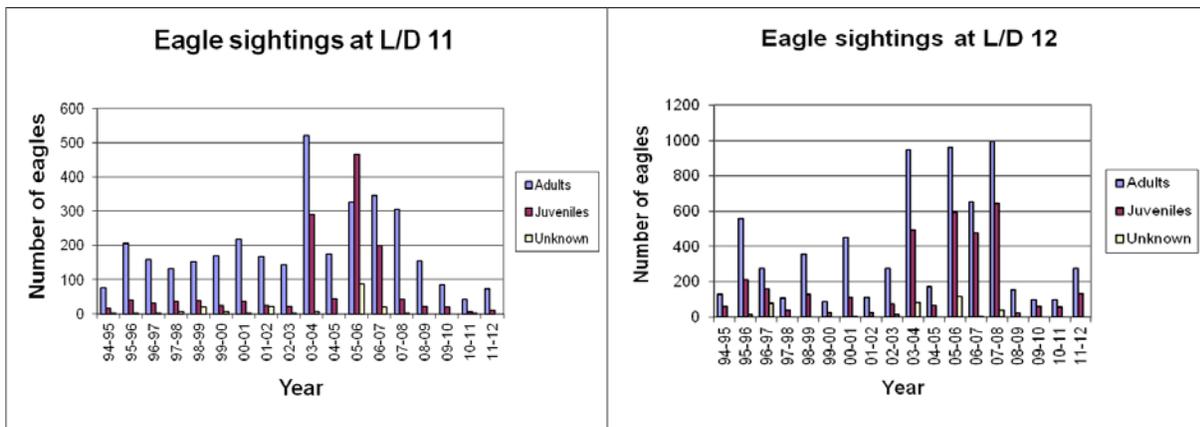


Figure 4. Eagles sighted per lock & dam 1994-2012 seasons.

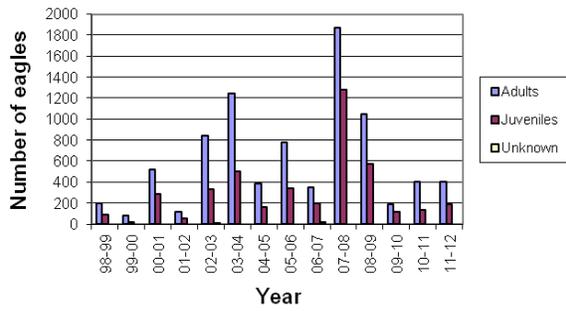


Eagle Sightings* at L/D 11 – 22 on the Upper Mississippi River & La Grange, Peoria, Starved Rock, & Marseilles on the Illinois Waterway December – February 2011-2012

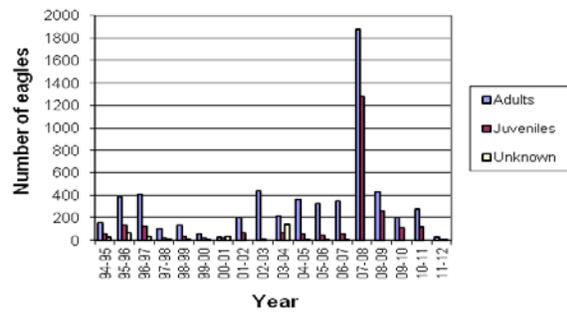
- Data taken once weekly



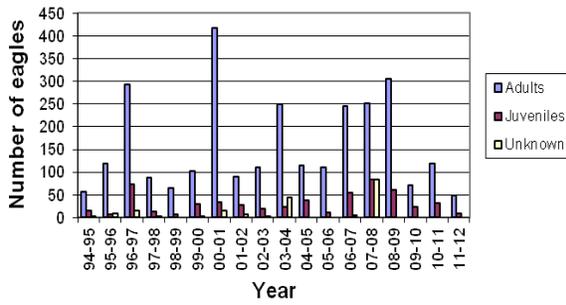
Eagle sightings at L/D 13



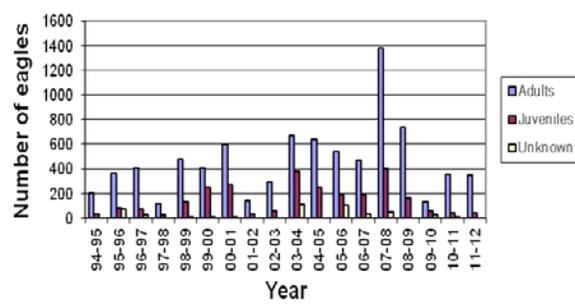
Eagle sightings at L/D 14



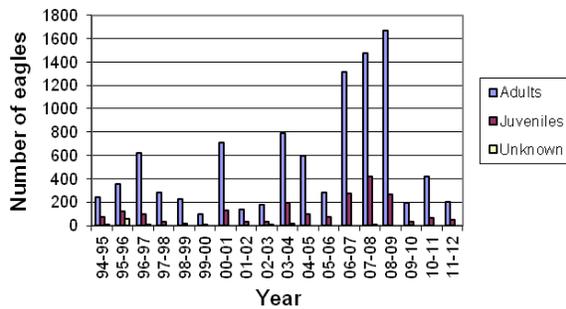
Eagle sightings at L/D 15



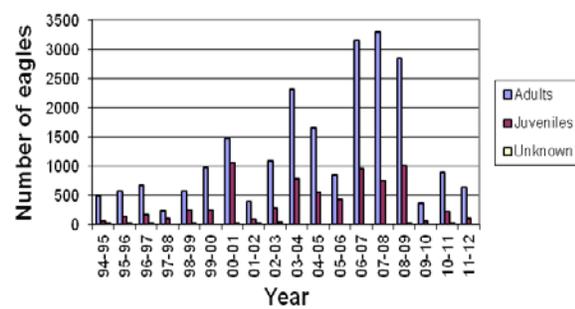
Eagle sightings at L/D 16



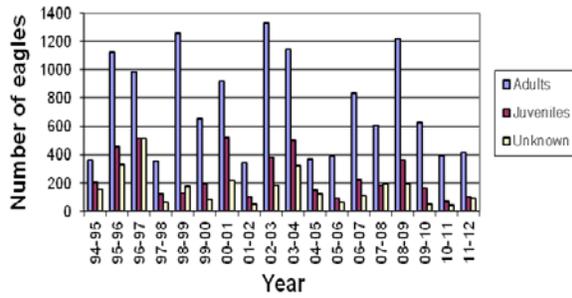
Eagle sightings at L/D 17



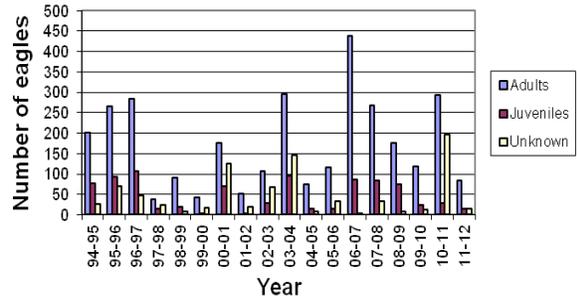
Eagle sightings at L/D 18



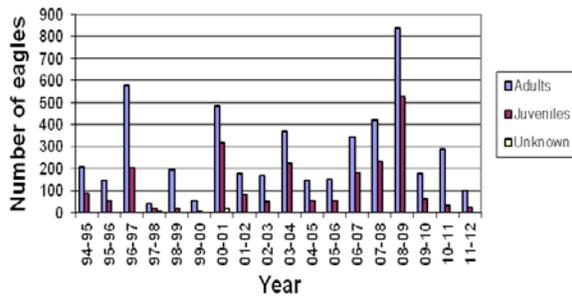
Eagle sightings at L/D 19



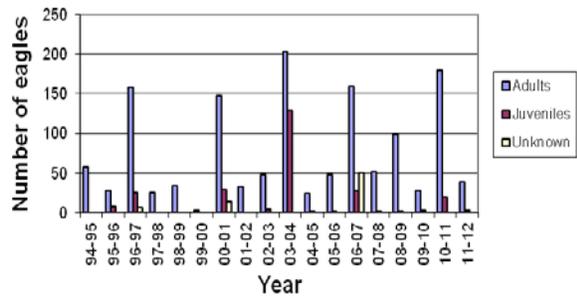
Eagle sightings at L/D 20



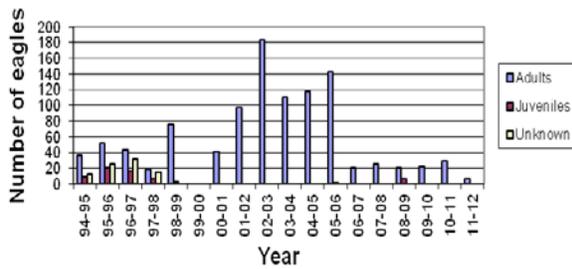
Eagle sightings at L/D 21



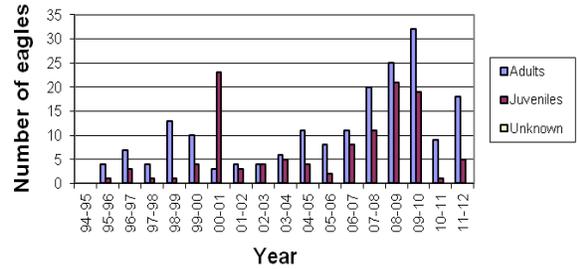
Eagle sightings at L/D 22

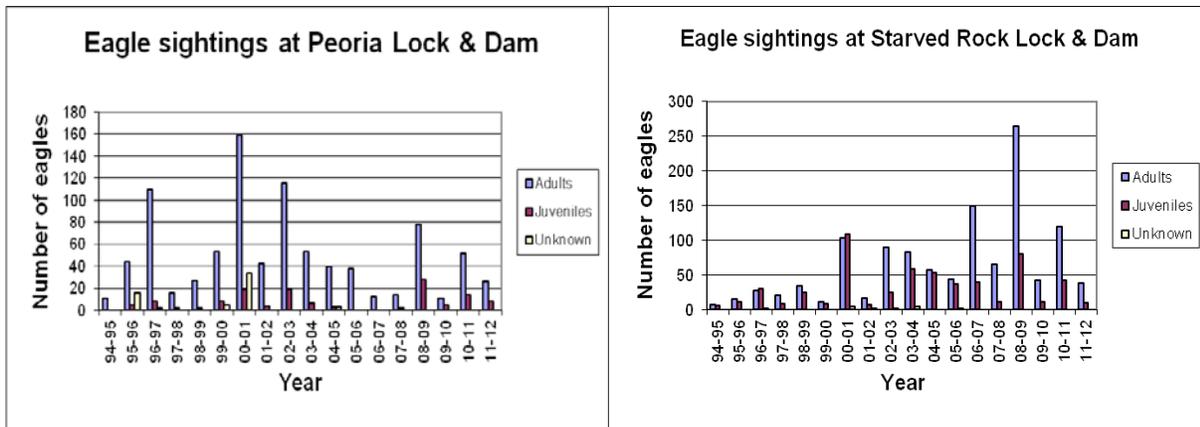


Eagle sightings at LaGrange Lock & Dam



Eagle sightings at Marseilles Lock & Dam





A special thanks to all the lock masters and their assistance that without their participation and efforts this long history and seasonal information would not be available.