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## **50-YEAR GOLDEN EAGLE NESTING TRENDS IN SOUTH-CENTRAL MONTANA**

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Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) migration counts in the western North America have shown a significant negative trend in recent years. However, the causes of these declines are unknown and it remains unclear if declining migration counts correlate to a declining population or changes in migratory behavior. Long-term research on nesting Golden Eagle populations is lacking and is needed to properly assess the current Golden Eagle population status in many areas. In 1962, intensive monitoring efforts were initiated in a roughly 1200-mi<sup>2</sup> study area in south-central Montana. The objectives were, among other things, to determine density and productivity of Golden Eagles. This area was re-surveyed in the mid 1990s to begin looking at long-term population trends. In 2009, we initiated a multi-year effort to investigate potential changes in the nesting trends in the same study area over a half a century. The data collected to date indicate an increase in the nesting density, similar nest success rates, and a decrease in productivity when compared with both the 1960's and 1990s studies. The longevity of data collected in this study area allows for one of the longest-term comparisons for Golden Eagle nesting density and success in the West and provides invaluable insights into the status of nesting Golden Eagles in this region.