



Fallow agricultural cropland near Altai pine forest edge.



Mixed forest-steppe habitat near low mountains of the Altai.

**Habitat:** Breed in forest - steppe composed of pine or mixed pine-broadleaved forests on the uplands surrounded by the open landscapes; islands of trees in flood lands of small rivers; cultivated land near forest edge. Winter in open flat country and semi-desert regions.

**Habit:** Perch on tree tops, poles or ground. Occur singly or in pairs. Steal food from small eagles, hawks, kites and crows. Frequent garbage dumps. Territorial on breeding grounds.

**Distribution:** Palearctic breeder. Winter migrant to the Indian sub-continent, Africa and SE China. **Status:** Widespread winter migrant in India.

**Food:**

On breeding grounds hunt Altai Zokor, Long-tailed Souslik, Siberian Mole, Rook, young Magpies and Jackdaws, etc. Kelptoparasitic. Scavenge on deer and other mammal carcasses. Hunt amphibians, reptiles (Fat-tailed Lizard, Russell's Viper, etc.), birds and small mammals on wintering grounds; also scavenge.



Altai Zokor *Myospalx myospalx*.



Magpie chick *Pica pica*.



Rook *Corvus frugilegus*.



Jackdaw nestlings in the nest *Corvus monedula*.



Long-tailed Souslik *Spermophilus undulatus*.



Siberian Mole *Talpa altaica*.



Remains of a deer *Capreolus pygargus*.

**Phenology:**



A pair of eggs in the nest.



One egg and two chicks.



Seven days chicks.



Two to three weeks chicks.



Chicks with food.



Three chicks in the nest are rare.



Four weeks chicks.



Age difference due to asynchronous hatching.



Three young in the nest of more than 60 days.

**Flight:**



Flight is leisurely with heavy wing beats followed by glides. Soar on thermals. Wings are held parallel to body when soaring, not in a V above it.



**Identification:**

- Deep, glossy blackish brown plumage of adults.
- Pale, whitish tawny buff head and neck; also vent and undertail-coverts.
- White marks on scapulars.
- Wings broad, short of tail tip when perched.
- Iris hazel; Eyelids yellow. Bill bluish horny, black tipped.
- Legs and feet chrome yellow.
- Hind claw short; Claws black.
- Female larger than male.
- Young is conspicuously pale; lined or streaked below.



Juvenile in front view with yellow eyelids.

**Related species:**

Steppe Eagle. Indian Spotted Eagle. Greater Spotted Eagle. Golden Eagle.

## Nests:



Clockwise: On the deformed top of a pine; on a willow; eagle in the typical nest on a poplar.

6 to 10 m up in the fork of pine, birch and poplar trees (90 %); rarely nest on larch, alder, oak, willow and aspen. Nests also recorded on rocks and metal geodetic triangles. Nest is a large conglomerate of branches, sticks and twigs and the inner cup is lined with fresh leaves.

## Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* Savigny, 1809.

Type locality: Upper Egypt.

Local names: *Garud* (Marathi); *Jumiz, Satangal, Bada Jumiz* (Hindi); *Frus* (Bengal).

- **Size:** 81 - 90 cm.
- **Weight:** 3600 g.
- **Wing:** Male 575 - 600 mm; Female 605 - 630 mm.
- **Breeding season:** April - August. Young depart from mid July to mid Aug / Sept.
- **Clutch:** 2-3 eggs.
- **Eggs:** White. Broad oval. 70.9 mm x 54.6 mm. (Baker).
- **Incubation:** 44-45 d.
- **Hatching Success:** 2.6 eggs / yr / pair.
- **Breeding Success:** 35 % to 77 %. 1.5 fledglings per nest per year.
- **Call:** Rapid bark like *owk, owk*. Usually silent on wintering grounds.



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Ela File 11

## IMPERIAL EAGLE

- **Order:** Falconiformes
- **Family:** Accipitridae
- **Status:** Winter Migrant.

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## THREATS:

Habitat loss, logging for timber and change in land use pattern are major threats. Electrocution is another threat in the breeding habitat in Russia, Kazakstan and adjoining countries. Faces risk of poisoning due to carrion and refuse eating habit.



Extensive and widespread tree felling for timber is a major threat. Habitat protection is the only solution to this dire problem.

## Etymology:

*Aquila* (L), an eagle; *heliacos* (Gr), solar, of the sun (*helios*, the sun). Refers to the pale, golden head and nape. (Pande, Satish. 2009).

## Amazing Facts:

Imperial Eagle is a symbol of royalty, but the powerful eagle likes to pirate prey from smaller raptors, crows and gulls! Large numbers of eagles are electrocuted due to open power lines in the steppes where they breed.

## Cultural aspects:

The Imperial Eagle is aptly named, and is displayed on royal insignias and heraldry. It is considered as a symbol of power and royalty. Napoleon's Grand Army bore the Imperial Eagle on its flag since 1804. Features in art and sculpture of Europe, North Africa and Asia.



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