

How to Photograph Eagles

1.). Know your subject - know where the eagles are, and how to get close enough without scaring or disturbing them. Use field-craft, e.g. move slowly, approach in a zig-zag path, watch for signs that the bird might depart, etc.

2). Do not disturb birds at the nest, and always remember that the bird's well-being comes before any desire to get a better picture.

3). Know your equipment - how to use the menus and settings quickly, especially for fast-flying birds and changing light conditions.

4). A camera that can power-on and focus very quickly, and has a rapid burst mode, high ISO capabilities, and a large sensor (that usually means a dSLR) generally provides a higher proportion of "keepers" than one that can't.

5). No lens is ever long enough for most bird photographers! Eagles are big, but even so, 400mm. is usually the minimum focal length that will give good results without too much cropping in most cases.

6). However steady you think your hands are, photos of perched birds are always sharper with a steady tripod and a good tripod head. Birds in flight can, however, often be

more easily photographed by hand-holding and panning. For hand-holding, use a shutter speed that, at minimum, is $1/\text{focal length}$ (including the camera's crop factor) -e.g. for a D300 with a 400mm. lens, use faster than $1/600$ sec.

7). Adult Bald eagles are black and white, and therefore present exposure problems. Try and expose for the whites, but avoid overblown highlights.

8). Try and catch a shot of the bird doing something interesting, and try and make eye contact rather than looking away - it makes for a more interesting image.

9). Learn how to use post-processing software to remove extraneous objects, e.g. branches, that appear to stick out of the birds head, pass in front of the bird etc., and use noise reduction and selective sharpening of the main subject as needed. For birds in flight, high shutter speeds are usually necessary to stop the action, so high ISOs are also often needed - this often means digital noise.

10). Shoot lots, and ruthlessly delete the non-keepers.

Happy shooting ---

Richard Stern (for KC Photo Club)