

Recognizing the Feet and Talons of North American Birds of Prey

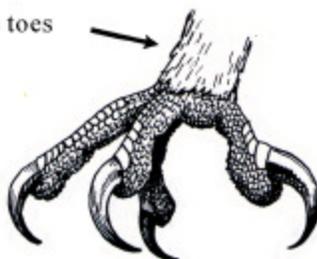
Part III. Distinguishing Bald and Golden Eagles

The detached legs and feet of Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are regularly encountered in wildlife investigations. The feet of these eagles can be distinguished from those of all other North American birds of prey by on their very large size and powerful talons. The middle toes of both eagle species are at least 2 inches long, not including the talons.

It is also possible to distinguish Bald Eagles from Golden Eagles based on their legs and feet alone.

Golden Eagles:

legs fully feathered, all the way to the base of the toes



Bald Eagles:

leg feathers not extending all the way to the toes;
lower 1 inch of leg is bare



References:

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