

Summary of Bald Eagles Tested for Lead at Avian Haven Rehabilitation Center, 2004 – 2020

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Bald eagle found with no wounds or fractures, died on December 25th, 2018 despite intensive treatment efforts, lead > 65 ug/dl.

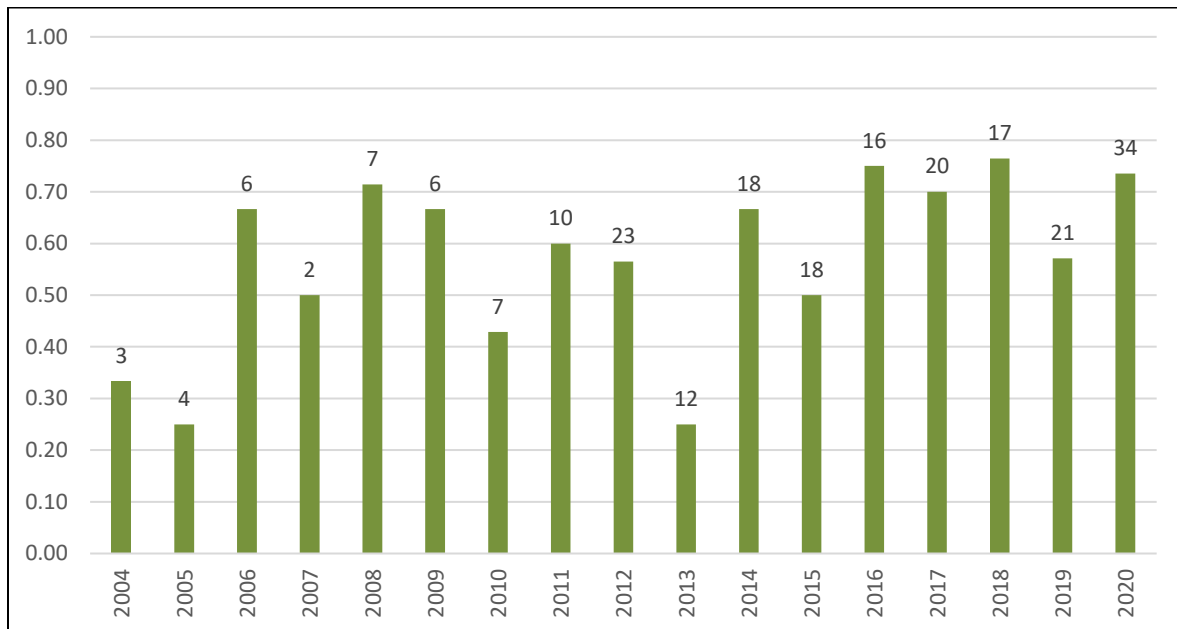
Data were summarized from bald eagles submitted and tested for lead at Avian Rehabilitation Center between 2004 and 2020 (Figure 1 and 2). The lead test kit consistently used by Avian Haven does not read values above 65 ug/dl. In cases with readings > 65 ug/dl, 65 ug/dl was used for this summary (Figure 2). In some cases, samples are sent out for more detailed analysis and values can come back as high as 1960 ug/dl (2012), 1980 ug/dl (2014), 110 ug/dl, 120 ug/dl, 400 ug/dl (2016), 100ug/dl, and 180 ug/dl (2017). Consequently, the values in Figures 2 and 3 would be much higher if samples were sent out regularly for detailed analysis.

Not all bald eagles were consistently tested, the summary represents values from birds that were tested for lead. Lead values of hatch year birds admitted to Avian Haven prior to October were not included. Testing of this age group has been inconsistent over the years as hatch year birds do not experience elevated blood lead levels. Of the 100 hatch year birds admitted from 2004 to 2020 between June and September 53 were tested and the average blood lead level was 1.6 ug/dl (min = 0, max = 5.4).



Eagle found on July 15th, 2019 unable to fly with no apparent injuries was able to recover and be released. However, it was recovered again on January 7, 2020 with no apparent injuries, lead 28.5 ug/dl. It was not able to use its legs and was subsequently euthanized.

Figure 1. Proportion of measured cases with elevated blood lead (≥ 10 ug/dl) for bald eagles at Avian Haven Rehabilitation Center, Maine.



Note: Numbers above each bar represent the total number of admitted bald eagles tested for lead. Values at or above 10 ug/dl are suspected to affect bodily functions.

Figure 2. Total number of cases of eagles exhibiting lead exposure (elevated blood lead $Pb \geq 10$ ug/dl represented by dark green bars, ($Pb < 10$ ug/dl represented by light green bars). Note that the bald eagle population in Maine has increased from 2004 to 2020.

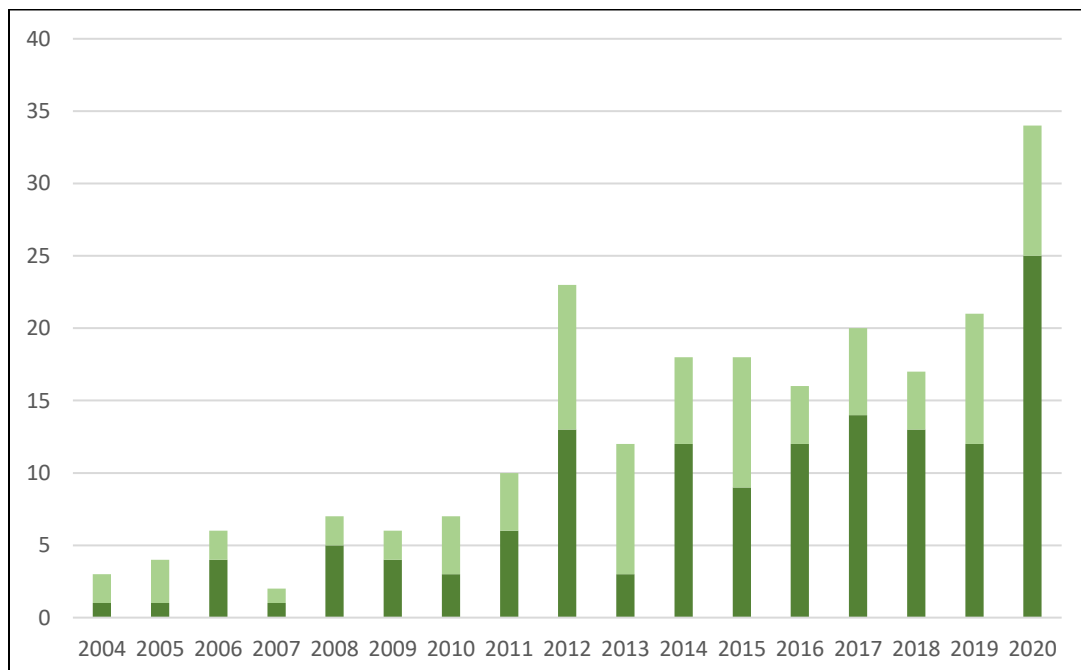


Figure 3. Average lead (ug/dl) monthly values of bald eagles tested at Avian Rehabilitation Center, Maine, 2004 – 2020. Note that samples > 65 ug/dl were counted as 65 ug/dl, thus values are likely much higher than shown below.

