

USPS Takes a New Look at Its Iconic Symbol

by John F. Dunn



On May 14, 2026, in Wabasha, Minn., the United States Postal Service will issue the Bald Eagle: Hatchling to Adult Forever rate stamps in five designs, in a pressure-sensitive adhesive (PSA) pane of 20 stamps

The stamp designs, created by noted ornithologist and illustrator David Allen Sibley feature realistic paintings of bald eagles at five different stages of life. The selvage shows a photograph of an adult eagle with two hatchlings in a nest, taken by Craig Goodwin. Art director Derry Noyes designed the stamps and pane.

The eagle as an American symbol first appeared as part of the 1869 Pictorial 30¢ “Shield, Eagle & Flags” design, and later was adopted by the United States Post Office and the USPS as their primary symbol.



Per illustrator Sibley, “While the bald eagle is known to virtually all Americans as our national bird, few people know much about them. Showing the series of life stages in these stamps is a simple and visual way to emphasize that the familiar adult eagle has already lived through a series of transitional plumages, finding food, migrating and surviving all of life’s challenges. I hope these stamps spark curiosity and a greater appreciation for the lives of eagles.”

Wabasha is famous as the setting for the 1993 film *Grumpy Old Men* and its 1995 sequel, *Grumpier Old Men*. A sign reading “Welcome to Wabasha, Home of Grumpy Old Men” promotes that status.

More relevant to the subject of the stamp issue, the National Eagle Center is in Wabasha. Per Wikipedia, the Center is a nonprofit educational, interpretive center and museum located on the banks of the Mississippi River that focuses on education about eagles and the Upper Mississippi River watershed. In addition to opportunities to view wild eagles throughout the year from viewing decks, non-releasable bald eagles are on exhibit at the center as well as interactive exhibits on eagle science and history.

The site is located where hundreds of bald eagles congregate to scavenge and hunt fish year round due to a geographic anomaly at the confluence of the Mississippi and Chippewa Rivers. The Chippewa River’s sedimentary deposits formed a delta creating Lake Pepin, a naturally occurring lake on the Mississippi formed by the backup of water. The fast running water exiting the Chippewa delta prevents ice from being able to form on much of the Mississippi River in that area during the winter making it a good fishing ground for migrating eagles.

The Center houses both permanently injured and non-releasable bald eagles, and calls those resident eagles “ambassadors.” They are housed in a climate-controlled interior aviary with glass panels that allow visitors to watch the eagles from a distance.

The facility also has an exterior 25 foot high deck, as well as a river-level deck for viewing bald eagles complete with spotting scopes that provide opportunities to view wild eagles over the adjoining Mississippi River and backwaters, as well as river traffic and other species of wildlife.

Additional information and images also are available at the Center’s website, <https://www.nationaleaglecenter.org>.