



Regulatory Authorization – Salvage of Migratory Birds

Effective December 31, 2024, a new Regulatory Authorization replaces the previous requirement for a Migratory Bird Salvage Permit to pick up dead migratory birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. A list of migratory birds can be found at [50 CFR 10.13](#).

What is salvage?

Salvage is the act of picking up migratory birds that are found dead, including their parts, feathers, nonviable eggs, and inactive nests.

Who is eligible?

Any individual may opportunistically salvage migratory birds under this regulatory authorization. Examples could include:

- A person finds a bird that died from a vehicle-strike and wants to donate it to a nature center.
- A person who discovers a dead bird near their home and wants to dispose of it in the trash.

What conditions are there?

Salvaged specimens must be donated or destroyed within seven calendar days. Migratory bird specimens cannot be possessed for personal use.

Where can specimens be donated?

Specimens can be donated to individuals or entities authorized under a valid permit or regulatory authorization. This includes most government agencies and non-profit organizations involved in conservation education, such as public schools and nature centers. Salvaged migratory birds may also be donated to Tribes with a Migratory Bird Remains permit or to a Non-Eagle Feather Repository. Each donated specimen must be tagged with:

1. Species name
2. Date and location of salvage
3. Name and contact information of who salvaged the bird

How should I dispose of specimens I don't donate?

If not donated, migratory bird specimens must be completely destroyed. Common disposal methods include burial or incineration. In areas where it is allowed, placing specimens

in the trash is acceptable, as landfill burial meets this requirement.

What about eagle specimens?

Bald eagles and golden eagles are also protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which has additional requirements. Eagle specimen salvage is limited to whole eagles, eagle parts (e.g., wing or tail), or feathers. The salvage of eagle nests or eggs is not authorized, regardless of their condition.

If you find an eagle specimen, you have two options:

1. Notify your federal, Tribal, or state wildlife agency.
2. Contact the [National Eagle Repository](#) (Repository) for instructions.

Whenever possible, contact the Repository before salvaging the specimen. The Repository determines whether salvaged eagle specimens must be sent to the Repository or donated to other authorized entities. If the eagle is salvaged in Indian Country, it may be donated to that Tribe if the Tribe has an Eagle Remains permit.

As with migratory birds, eagle specimens may not be retained for personal use and specimens may not be held in possession for more than seven calendar days, unless directed otherwise by the Service.

Are additional authorizations required?

It is your responsibility to ensure compliance with all applicable requirements. Additional federal, Tribal, state, or territorial permits may be required. For example, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and many states have salvage permit requirements.

This regulatory authorization does not authorize you to salvage specimens on federal or state lands or other public or private property without written authorization from the respective authorities or landowners.

For your safety and to prevent the spread of disease, always follow established guidelines for the safe

handling and disposal of dead wildlife. Many states have regulations governing the transport of salvaged specimens across state borders.

Are there reporting and record-keeping requirements?

Yes, you'll need to report banded specimens to the U.S. Geological Survey Bird Banding Laboratory at [reportband.gov](#).

You'll also need to keep records of donated specimens, including those sent to the Repository, for five years. These records must include:

1. Species and specimen type
2. Date and location of salvage
3. Recipient details

Does this regulatory authorization apply to researchers?

No. Researchers must still obtain a scientific collecting permit, which includes authorization to collect samples from salvaged birds.

Does this regulatory authorization apply to activities conducted by utilities?

No. Utilities should continue to use a special purpose utility permit (SPUT) to salvage migratory birds found on or near utility property, infrastructure, or rights-of-way.

Does this regulatory authorization apply to government agencies?

Yes. Government agencies may use this authorization. Except, natural resource agencies should use the natural resource agency employees regulatory authorization (50 CFR 21.34).

Who should I contact with questions?

Your [regional migratory bird permitting office](#) can answer any questions.

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