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## 6 The White-Tailed Eagle on the Brink of Extinction in Twentieth-Century Finland: A Digital Approach to Emotional Responses in the Media

The white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) is a bird whose flight pattern in the sky always captivates the heart of a nature lover.<sup>1</sup>

In 1990, the Finnish newspaper *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* used these words to refer to the “bird of the week”, whose distinctive calls were heard during radio programme breaks. It was noted that for many, an encounter with this magnificent bird was a matter of chance due to a significant decline in its breeding population, with the white-tailed eagle classified as critically endangered, thereby necessitating diligent conservation efforts to ensure its survival<sup>2</sup>; conservation had already begun in the 1970s and the situation did improve substantially after the turn of the millennium. The newspaper article also referred to the difficult history of the eagle in Finland, which had been living on the brink of extinction for an entire century. This is precisely the focus of this chapter, which utilises press material to explore the emotions associated with this endangered status of the eagle. Before discussing how this analysis is conducted, it is worth taking a closer look at the long history of attitudes towards the white-tailed eagle in Finland.

In the late nineteenth century, the white-tailed eagle—which had nested in coastal and archipelagic areas and on large inland lakes—had become a target of human persecution. This persecution had a long tradition, which is evident from the fact that there was already a bounty payment system in place in the eighteenth century, however, the persecution of birds of prey became more systematic in the late nineteenth century, after the Imperial Hunting Decree was introduced in 1898. At that time, Finland was part of the Russian Empire and the system continued when Finland became an independent state in 1917. A bounty payment was given by municipalities and hunting societies for birds considered to be causing damage to human activities, which included all Finnish raptors and owls, including the

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1 Matti Särkkä, “Ylväs harvinaisuus,” *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, July 21, 1990, 6.

2 Matti Särkkä, “Ylväs harvinaisuus,” *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, July 21, 1990, 6.

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golden eagle and the white-tailed eagle.<sup>3</sup> The bounty-paying system was in force until 1975, although the last bird of prey to be paid for was the Northern goshawk, which was outlawed until 1963.<sup>4</sup> In addition to “perniciousness”, the eagle also had political connotations in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries in Finland, used as a symbol for numerous kingdoms and empires and also representing the Russian Empire. In Finland, one of the most famous nationalist images was Eetu Isto’s painting *Attack* (1899), in which a Russian two-headed eagle is depicted to be attacking a Finnish maiden and a law book.<sup>5</sup> The painting lived on in countless reproductions, as Finland struggled to break free from Russian rule.

The conservation of the white-tailed eagle was the subject of widespread debate in the early 1900s, when the species’ decline became apparent. This debate became more active in the 1920s, and the future of the eagle was discussed not only in Finland but also in Sweden, where the situation was equally worrying.<sup>6</sup> One of the best-known nature documentary films of the period was *Sagan om de sista örnarna* (“The Tale of the Last Eagles”, 1923), directed by Bengt Berg, which premiered in Finland in January 1924 under the title *Viimeiset kotkat* (“The Last Eagles”). Berg was a renowned nature photographer and had become close to the life of the majestic bird; he wrote also a book based on the subject, which was published in Finnish in 1930, with images from the film (Figure 6.1).<sup>7</sup> The film and the book told the story of the “last” surviving eagles and were an elegy for a species that was predicted to disappear in the next few years.

Perhaps it was owing to such emotional statements that conservation efforts really took off. In Sweden, the protection decision was extended to the entire country in 1924; it was launched in Åland in the same year, and in the rest of Finland in 1926.<sup>8</sup>

Although conservation efforts were launched early on, this did not solve the problem, as birds of prey were traditionally viewed negatively. The white-tailed eagle was on the verge of extinction for practically the entire twentieth century, as the quote from 1990 at the beginning of this chapter illustrates. In addition to negative attitudes, numerous other factors contributed to this—particularly the

3 Mari Pohja-Mykrä, Timo Vuorisalo and Sakari Mykrä, “Organized persecution of birds of prey in Finland: historical and population biological perspectives,” *Ornis fennica* 89 (2012): 1–3.

4 Esa Lehtikoinen, Risto Lemmetyinen, Timo Vuorisalo and Mia Rönkä, *Suomen lintutiede 1828–1974* (Turku: Faros, 2020), 441–42.

5 For more information, see, for example, the Finnish National Gallery. Accessed November 26, 2023. <https://www.kansallismuseo.fi/fi/digitaalinen-kokoelma/nayttelyiden-helmet/suomen-tarina/hyokkays>.

6 Lehtikoinen, Lemmetyinen, Vuorisalo and Rönkä, *Suomen lintutiede 1828–1974*, 442.

7 Bengt Berg, *Viimeiset kotkat* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1930).

8 Lehtikoinen, Lemmetyinen, Vuorisalo and Rönkä, *Suomen lintutiede 1828–1974*, 442.



**Figure 6.1:** The front cover of the Finnish edition of Bengt Berg's book *Sagan om de sista örnarna* (1923). The Finnish translation was published in 1930.

increasing human impact on wildlife after the Second World War and the accumulation of environmental toxins on the birds of prey at the top of the food chain. The situation was particularly serious in the 1970s, when conservation efforts were stepped up by increasing winter feeding of white-tailed eagles, building artificial nesting sites and protecting nesting areas from logging.<sup>9</sup>

In this chapter, my aim is to examine the public debate on the white-tailed eagle, bearing in mind the long conservation history mentioned above, and to analyse the sentiments surrounding the species and its endangerment. How was the status and significance of the white-tailed eagle discussed and what emotional vocabulary was used? How did the semantic position of the white-tailed eagle in the press change over the course of the century? This case is particularly interesting because the status of the eagle was fragile for so long, and the period of uncertainty stretched from the early years of independent Finland to the twenty-first century. Simultaneously, the historical context in which emotions towards the eagle were embedded changed dramatically. It is also evident that concerns regarding environmental pollution had a specific impact from the 1960s and 1970s

<sup>9</sup> Lehtikoinen, Lemmetyinen, Vuorisalo and Rönkä, *Suomen lintutiede 1828–1974*, 443.

onwards, as did concerns regarding the state of the Baltic Sea. The white-tailed eagle is a species that lives along the coast and, therefore, its fate also reflects views on the future of marine areas.

This chapter draws both on the history of emotions and the history of the media. In the twenty-first century, the history of emotions has emerged as an important, vibrant area of historical research. It has focused mainly on human interactions, such as feelings of grief, shame, guilt, anger and fear, but research has also been conducted on the material and immaterial dimensions of emotional ties, from nostalgia to patriotism. In the field of human-animal studies, Dolly Jørgensen's *Recovering Lost Species in the Modern Age: Histories of Longing and Belonging* (2019) has been ground-breaking in bringing human-animal relations to the realm of history of emotions, analysing the emotions evoked by lost or vanishing species, and their recovery.<sup>10</sup> My chapter has a similar interest in the emotional entanglements that have been created around species on the brink of extinction, in my case the white-tailed eagle. In doing this, my aim is also to draw on a media-historical perspective to consider how the press in particular was involved in articulating and conveying the emotions associated with endangered species.

The status and conservation of the white-tailed eagle has certainly received attention in previous research. Mari Pohja-Mykrä, Timo Vuorisalo and Sakari Mykrä have studied the long history of bird of prey persecution in Finland,<sup>11</sup> while another article by Liisa Kaski and Otto Latva on attitudes towards fur animals provides context for the treatment of animals considered harmful.<sup>12</sup> The rescue of the white-tailed eagle from the verge of extinction has been a frequently cited success story,<sup>13</sup> with several studies conducted in Finland and Sweden to monitor the development of the population of the eagle, while also referring to its history.<sup>14</sup> Above all, Tuomas Räsänen emphasised the environmental awareness

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**10** Dolly Jørgensen, *Recovering Lost Species in the Modern Age: Histories of Longing and Belonging* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2019).

**11** Pohja-Mykrä, Vuorisalo and Mykrä, "Organized persecution," 1–19.

**12** Liisa Kaski and Otto Latva, "Turkiseläin tuotteena 1800-luvun Suomessa," in *Tunteva tuote. Kuinka eläimistä tuli osa teollista tuotantoa?*, ed. Taija Kaarlenkoski and Otto Latva (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2022), 49–71.

**13** For more on this history see Tuomas Räsänen, "Merikotkan ahdinko ja hoivausojelun synty," in *Kanssakulkijat. Monitajisten kohtaamisten jäljillä*, ed. Tuomas Räsänen and Nora Schuurman (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2020), 285–312. See also *Rovdjuren och deras förvaltning. Betänkande av Utredningen om de stora rovdjuren* (Stockholm: Swedish Government, 2007), 85–86.

**14** For a summary of developments in Sweden, see, for example, the report by Peter Nilsson and Frans Olofsson; see Peter Nilsson and Frans Olofsson, *Havsörn i Västernorrland* (Stockholm: Länsstyrelsen Västernorrland, 2009). See also Björn Helander, "Reproduction of the White-Tailed Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Sweden," *Holarctic Ecology* 8, no. 3 (1985): 211–27.

that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and laid the foundations for the conservation of the white-tailed eagle. In his article, “Does a Dead Wild Animal Have Agency? The White-Tailed Eagle as a Catalyst for an Ideational Revolution in Finland”, Räsänen highlights the agency of the white-tailed eagle, even dead birds, which ended up being analysed by researchers and provided information on the changing marine environment.<sup>15</sup> Räsänen’s analysis is based on contributions to the magazine *Suomen Luonto* (“Finnish Nature”) in the 1960s and 1970s. What is relevant to my own analysis is that no previous research has explored the role of press publicity in the cultural positioning of the white-tailed eagle, nor has it examined the issue from an emotional perspective.<sup>16</sup>

The discussion in this chapter is based on a large collection of newspapers and magazines digitised by the National Library of Finland, which currently comprises over 25 million pages of content. The collection is internationally unique, as all newspapers and magazines in Finland up to the 1940s have been digitised, with digitisation work continuing at a rate of approximately one million pages per year. Although comprehensive digitisation only goes back to the 1940s, there is also sufficient material from the period after the Second World War to allow conclusions to be drawn. As there are specific methodological challenges in using digitised material, I address these heuristic issues in the following subsection. Thereafter, I go on to analyse the emotions associated with the white-tailed eagle and its endangered status in press coverage.

## Digital Material and Methods

Newspapers and magazines provide an important channel for analysing and understanding the cultural meanings of perceptions of nature. The press was also an essential channel for public debate, exchanging opinions, reporting on nature-related phenomena and informing decisions and efforts such as conservation. In Finland, press reports have been published mainly in two languages, Finnish and Swedish. The Swedish-language press was dominant until the 1880s, but since then most of the press coverage has been in Finnish. The press grew exponen-

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15 Tuomas Räsänen, “Does a dead wild animal have agency? The white-tailed eagle as a catalyst for an ideational revolution in Finland,” in *Shared Lives of Humans and Animals*, ed. Tuomas Räsänen and Taina Syrjämaa (London: Routledge, 2017), 93–104.

16 Taija Kaarlenkaski’s article on affective attitudes towards animal species in urban environments comes close to this perspective. One of the species discussed in the article is the white-tailed eagle through data from the 2020s. See more in Taija Kaarlenkaski, “Affektivisia eläinkohtaamisia kaupunkiympäristössä. Monilajinen lähiluonto verkkomedioissa,” *Lähikuva* 1–2 (2022): 61–82.

tially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and when Finland gained independence in 1917, 150 newspaper titles were published in the country, 114 of which were in Finnish<sup>17</sup>; only in the 1920s did the press cover the northernmost part of Finland. In terms of the number of titles, the volume more than doubled during the twentieth century, before falling again after the breakthrough of the internet. In 2021, 282 newspapers were published in Finland.<sup>18</sup>

The problem with using digitised press material is that it is only comprehensive up to the 1940s; thereafter, the annual digitisation rate varies. For example, 39 titles are available for the year 1950, of which 26 are in Swedish; in 1970, 31 titles are available, of which 25 are in Swedish. The imbalance between languages is explained by the fact that in August 2023 a project was completed to digitise all Swedish-language newspapers and magazines in Finland. Although the source material is heavily weighted towards Swedish-language material, it is also useful from the perspective of this chapter, as the white-tailed eagle was a coastal bird and it is in this area that Swedish-language press has been published. On the other hand, the digitised material also includes major Finnish-language newspapers—such as *Helsingin Sanomat*, *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus* and *Uusi Suomi*—which are comprehensively available up to the end of the 1970s. Nevertheless, there is plenty of material in general. It is reasonable to assume that the meanings associated with white-tailed eagles will become visible to a sufficient extent with this material alone.

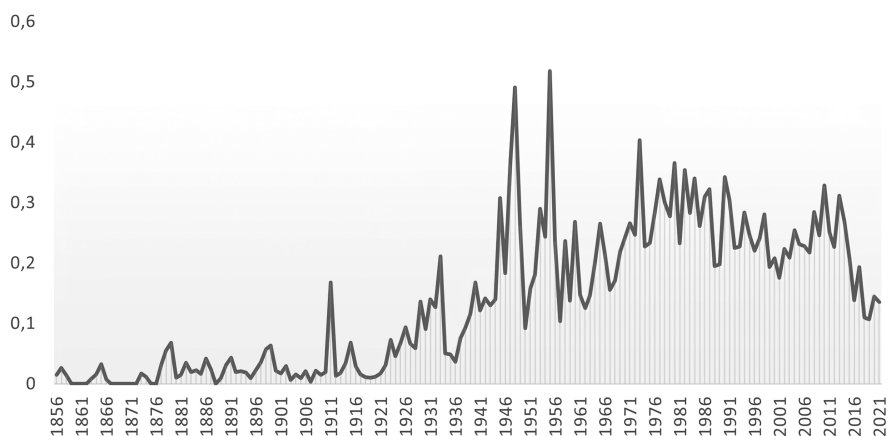
In Finnish and Swedish, the white-tailed eagle is known as a sea eagle, *merikotka* and *havsörn*, respectively. When the National Library of Finland's collection is searched with the names “merikotka” and “havsörn”, a total of 31,606 hits are found, the first from 1856 and the latest from 2021 (which is the last year available in the collection). On average, there were over 190 hits per year. If we want to obtain an overall picture of the extent to which the white-tailed eagle was the subject of interest in the press, it is possible to relate the number of hits to the number of pages published each year. This is necessary since the volume of the press was constantly changing and also increased significantly over time; thus, it is natural that there should be more hits, and hence the increased number of references does not necessarily imply that interest in the status of the white-tailed eagle has increased over time or that the emotional emphasis has become stronger. Another problem is that the digitisation rate varies from year to year, which means that the National Library's material responds differently to searches in different decades. The significance of this variation can be controlled by normalising the search results—that is,

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<sup>17</sup> Digital Collection, National Library of Finland accessed November 26, 2023, [https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/serial-publications?generalTypes=NEWSPAPER&year=1917&set\\_language=en](https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/serial-publications?generalTypes=NEWSPAPER&year=1917&set_language=en).

<sup>18</sup> Number of Newspapers in Finland 2011–2021. Accessed November 26, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/678568/finland-annual-number-of-newspapers/>.

by dividing the number of hits per year by the number of digitised material available for that year. Here, the normalisation is based on the number of pages. Figure 6.2 presents the number of references to white-tailed eagles in the Finnish press for the period 1856–2021, normalised by the number of digitised materials available. The horizontal axis of the graph presents the years, while the vertical axis presents the percentage (number of hits per year divided by the number of digitised pages).



**Figure 6.2:** The number of references to the white-tailed eagle (*merikotka*, *havsörn*) in the Finnish press for the period 1856–2021, normalised by the number of digitised material available. Hannu Salmi on the basis of the National Library of Finland data.

The graph reveals that the white-tailed eagle attracted very little attention in the press before the Finnish independence in 1917, and it is only from the 1920s onwards that the number of references to the bird increases. The highest peaks in the graph occur after the Second World War and again in the 1970s, when a determined recovery of the white-tailed eagle population began.

In this chapter, I analyse the data using a combination of distant and close reading methods.<sup>19</sup> I utilise digital tools to analyse the data, but I also keep returning to individual newspaper texts to examine how they have dealt with the white-tailed eagle. This combination of macro and micro levels is, in my view, essential to make visible the meanings and emotions associated with the possible extinction of the eagle.

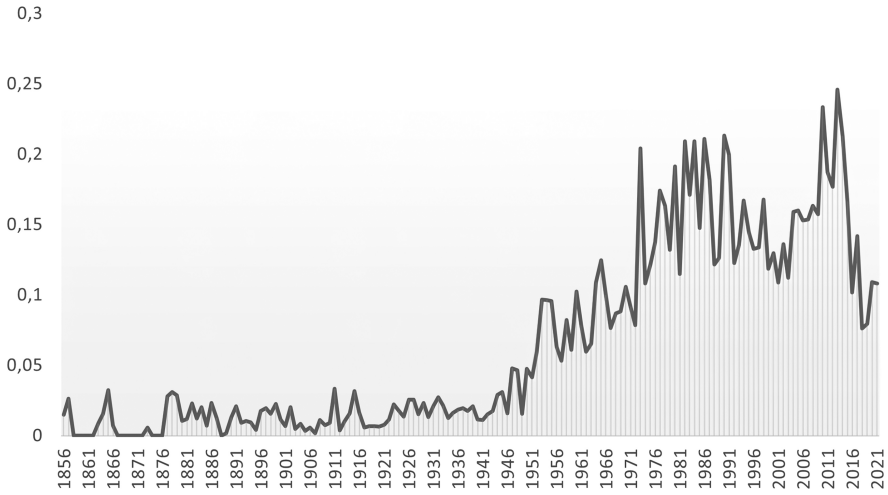
<sup>19</sup> Hannu Salmi, *What is Digital History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2021), 29–56. See also Hannu Salmi, “Textuality as Amplification: Reconsidering close reading and distant reading in cultural history”, *Rethinking History* (2024): 1–17.

The starting point is a simple search of the database for “merikotka OR havsörn”, which brings up references from Finnish- and Swedish-language sources and also identifies the inflectional forms of the words. There are, of course, source-critical problems, such as the inevitable “false positives”—that is, hits where the reference is based on an optical character recognition (OCR) error—or, for example, where the word “merikotka” has been used as the name of a ship, a block, a scout troop or a company, as was the case in the 1920s and 1930s. These errors can be identified through close reading of the data.

The importance of these “false positives” is so great that they need to be excluded from the data at the data preparation stage. During the preparation of this chapter, it became apparent that such cultural meanings of the white-tailed eagle are much greater than one might imagine. For example, Felix von Luckner’s book *The Sea Eagle* (originally titled *Seeadler*), published in 1925, was a memoir of the life of a naval soldier and was not related to the sea eagle as a bird species. Similarly, a block in the city of Helsinki was named Merikotka and was often referred to in address information. During the 1920s, when Finland had a prohibition law on alcohol, a ship called Merikotka sailed the Baltic Sea in search of smugglers and received a lot of press coverage. These examples illustrate the cultural significance of the white-tailed eagle and reveal how evocative a bird species the white-tailed eagle was, however, they do not provide access to the perceptions of the species. When these cultural practices related to the white-tailed eagle are excluded, the number of references is reduced by almost half, thereby leaving 15,789 hits. Figure 6.3 indicates how this data looks when it is normalised:

Figure 6.3 suggests that although the white-tailed eagle was widely publicised in the early twentieth century, references only really began to increase after the Second World War. This also indicates a growing concern regarding the status of the white-tailed eagle as part of Finland’s natural environment. The presence of the white-tailed eagle was particularly strong in the 1970s and 1980s, when Finland made determined efforts to save the species from extinction.

In the interface of the National Library of Finland, the search results can be downloaded for personal use in a comma-separated values (CSV) format, which allows the results to be processed by other software. Each search is also associated with a word environment, which is important for computer-assisted research. It is possible to analyse the words in which “white-tailed eagle” appeared. In my opinion, it is these word collocations—the words that appear in the context of the eagle—that are the clue to the changing meanings and to the emotions that are expressed. I have analysed the vocabulary of news reports using a freeware software called AntConc, which allows to filter the word combinations of which “white-tailed eagle” was part of in various decades. In preparing the data, the software also helped to locate words that could be used to identify and filter out unrelated press articles.



**Figure 6.3:** The number of references to the white-tailed eagle (*merikotka*, *havsörn*) in the Finnish press for the period 1856–2021, normalised by the number of digitised material available. In this figure, such cultural ramifications as references to ship names or city blocks have been excluded. Hannu Salmi on the basis of the National Library of Finland data.

## The Persistent Reputation of the Eagle

I began my analysis by exploring the newspaper reports from 1898 to 1923, the period when the white-tailed eagle was granted a bounty payment and when public debate on the conservation of the species began. In a broader context, the official inception of the conservation effort may be attributed to 1924 when the white-tailed eagle received protected status within Åland, an archipelagic region located between Finland and Sweden. During this period, 676 references were recorded. Drawing on digital methodology, I found numerous bigrams, combinations of two words, with the most common bigram in the data being “death of a hero” (*Sankarin kuolema*), which can be explained by the widespread publication in the 1910s of an advertisement selling reproductions of famous paintings. One of these was a painting by the Swedish artist Nils Forsberg, “En hjältes död” (Death of a hero) from 1888,<sup>20</sup> with the name of this painting next to another one that portrayed a white-tailed eagle. The advertisement included Bruno Liljefors’

<sup>20</sup> Nils Forsberg, *En hjältes död*, 1888. Accessed November 26, 2023. [https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nils\\_Forsberg#/media/Fil:Death\\_of\\_a\\_Hero\\_\(Nils\\_Forsberg\)\\_-\\_Nationalmuseum\\_-\\_18422.tif](https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nils_Forsberg#/media/Fil:Death_of_a_Hero_(Nils_Forsberg)_-_Nationalmuseum_-_18422.tif).

painting “Havsörnar” (Sea Eagles) from the year 1897.<sup>21</sup> Here, the bigram consists of the surname of the artist and the name of the painting and, of the 22 most common bigrams, no less than 15 are related to this single advertisement, with the others being lists of birds of prey published in the press. Bruno Liljefors (1860–1939) was an artist who was renowned for his detailed and dramatic depictions of nature. In many of his works, he captured white-tailed eagles, both in predatory situations and on the nest. In the painting “Havsörnar,” he depicted two eagles attacking a black-throated loon struggling in the waves. Liljefors subsequently became famous for his illustrations on the cover of Bengt Berg’s book on white-tailed eagles, but his pictures lived on for decades as countless reproductions, decorating homes not only in Sweden but also in Finland, representing the demand for his work in the early twentieth century. His paintings depicted a sublime spectacle of nature in which the viewer could admire the life of a large bird. What was essential was that the pictures were no longer merely black and white graphic reproductions; his paintings were marketed as chromolithographs, glowing with colour.<sup>22</sup>

The publicity given to the white-tailed eagle also included contributions that aimed at reducing the image of the eagle as harmful and damaging. By the early 1920s, it was clear that the fate of the species was at stake; the population of the white-tailed eagle in Finland had diminished and was relegated to only a few in areas such as the Åland Islands, the Turku archipelago and the Kvarken region,<sup>23</sup> to which the press drew particular attention. Thorsten Renvall (1868–1927)—an ornithologist, biologist and animal conservationist—wrote an extensive article for the Turku-based newspaper *Uusi Aura* entitled “Harmful animals and the insecurity of our hunting laws”<sup>24</sup>; in this text, he went through the species classified as harmful animals and set out to defend them. The text has previously been analysed by Liisa Kaski and Otto Latva, who draw attention to the role of fur animals. Renvall noted, among other things, that every fox killed in the summertime was an economic loss, since fox fur was only valuable as a commodity in winter and in summer the fox was useful to farmers as a mice exterminator.<sup>25</sup> In his article, Renvall also discussed the importance of the white-tailed eagle in many ways. He presented five perspectives—hunter, fisherman, farmer, zoologist and nature lover:

21 Bruno Liljefors, *Havsörnar*, 1897, Swedish National Gallery. Accessed November 26, 2023. <https://digitaltmuseum.se/021046508324/havsornar>.

22 See, for example, the advertisements *Hangö*, November 14, 1911, 4; *Västra Finland*, November 16, 1911, 4.

23 Räsänen, “Does a Dead Wild Animal Have Agency?”, 93.

24 Thorsten Renvall, “Wahingolliset eläimet ja metsästyslakimme turvattomat,” *Uusi Aura* January 13, 1912, 6.

25 Kaski and Latva, “Turkiseläin tuotteena 1800-luvun Suomessa,” 61.

Eagles, the golden eagle and the white-tailed eagle, are pests in the eyes of hunters because they kill species that hunters themselves want to kill. The white-tailed eagle is also harmful to fishing because it eats fish that fishermen want to catch. To a farmer, on the other hand, white-tailed eagles are almost harmless animals. There have been occasions when an eagle has taken a lamb, but this is a rare exception; it has never taken children, as you might read in books. As the largest and strongest bird of prey in the country, the eagle is an interesting animal for the zoologist. To a nature lover, it is one of the most valuable birds we have. No other bird makes such an aesthetic impact as the eagle. He who has once seen a white-tailed eagle soar higher and higher into the air, until at last, through the telescope, he sees it as a white, shining speck against the brilliant surface of the sun, will never forget it.<sup>26</sup>

Renvall's words end by highlighting the beauty and sublime emotional experience of the white-tailed eagle. However, he points out that from the hunter's and fisherman's point of view, the white-tailed eagle looked like a rival fighting for the same prey. Therefore, the eagle appeared to be a nuisance. However, by 1912, this competition had become irrelevant, as the number of eagles had decreased to such an extent that their need for food could no longer justify extermination. Perhaps, however, the emotional effect had remained and the hatred of the white-tailed eagle still existed. According to Renvall, the killing of eagles was also influenced by money, as there was money to be paid for killing them; as long as this practice existed, eagles were shot. Renvall ironically noted that when a white-tailed eagle appeared, "the first Sunday hunter on the spot" would shoot the eagles and receive "5 marks per adult and 2 marks per baby eagle."<sup>27</sup>

Renvall concluded by stating that there is so much to hunt on earth that it should be enough: "Even the most fragile sense of thirst for the beauty of nature demands that the bounty on the most magnificent bird in our land, the eagle, must stop."<sup>28</sup>

According to the press of the time, white-tailed eagles were regularly shot. In the hunting press, they were often presented as a major achievement, as in 1913, when the magazine *Metsätys ja kalastus* ("Hunting and Fishing") reported how Mr O. Studd had accidentally shot a white-tailed eagle with a wingspan of 2 metres and 16 centimetres.<sup>29</sup> Simultaneously, the magazine *Luonnon ystävä* ("Nature Friend") told sad stories of eagles whose flight had ended. A writer under the pseudonym E.W.S. from the city of Pori wrote the following lines on December 22, 1918:

<sup>26</sup> Thorsten Renvall, "Wahingolliset eläimet ja metsästyslakimme turvattomat," *Uusi Aura* January 13, 1912, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Thorsten Renvall, "Wahingolliset eläimet ja metsästyslakimme," *Uusi Aura* January 13, 1912, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Thorsten Renvall, "Wahingolliset eläimet ja metsästyslakimme," *Uusi Aura* January 13, 1912, 6.

<sup>29</sup> "Metsästysjuttuja, uutisia ja muita tietoja," *Metsätys ja kalastus* 12 (1913): 365.

Two eagles. A golden eagle struck a farmer's cat to death in Kiukainen, but the farmer saved the cat's carcass, armed it with scissors and the next day, December 3, 1918, there was a handsome creature in the scissors. The farmer nailed it to the door of his stable 'to drive away evil spirits'.

A white-tailed eagle was shot by some boys in Harjunpää, Ulvila, in mid-December 1918. I bought it at the market yesterday (for 10 marks). The eagle is young, maybe two years old, weighs 3.675 kg and has a wing tip spacing of 2.2 m".<sup>30</sup>

There were voices of opposition in the press, like that of Thorsten Renvall's, expressing views that something should be done urgently about the vulnerable position of the eagles, but also destructive views like the above-mentioned short notices, where birds were being persecuted. These texts also suggest conflicting emotions; the eagle was a charismatic animal, "a handsome creature" that aroused emotions by its proportions alone,<sup>31</sup> but at the same time, the eagle was associated with a magical aspect of apparently being able to ward off evil spirits.

## "The Mighty White-Tailed Eagle"

The next period in this analysis is that from 1924 to 1945, from the beginning of the protection measures until the end of the Second World War, a period when there were over 2,600 references to white-tailed eagles. Previous research has referred to some recovery of white-tailed eagle populations as a result of conservation measures. In Sweden, it is estimated that the number of white-tailed eagles doubled to approximately 100 pairs, before the decline began again in the 1950s.<sup>32</sup> In the early part of the period, there were doubts in the press regarding whether conservation measures would do anything to prevent the continued shooting of eagles. It was difficult to believe that the deeply rooted hatred of the birds of prey would ever reduce.

"It's a pity that these handsome lords of the air are shot, for such a rare sight they already are. It is a pity that our nature conservation law does not protect the white-tailed eagle," wrote the magazine *Metsästys ja kalastus* in January 1924.<sup>33</sup> The magazine's statement is contradictory, because just before this sentence it was reported how a hunter named Jalmari Johansson had shot a "mighty white-

30 "Pieniä tietoja," *Luonnon ystävä* 6 (1918): 167.

31 On nonhuman charisma, see Jamie Lorimer, "Nonhuman charisma," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007): 911–932.

32 Nilsson and Olofsson, *Havsörn i Västernorrland*, 6.

33 "Mahtava merikotka," *Metsästys ja kalastus* 1 (1924): 36.

tailed eagle". The news story appears to mix admiration and cynicism. On the one hand, it was a hunting magazine, which aimed to appreciate the hunter's skills, while also making a statement regarding the state of nature.

Examining all the press material reveals that journalists, particularly in the dailies, were active in taking a stand for the conservation of the white-tailed eagle and condemning the nationwide hostility towards birds of prey. In the 1920s and 1930s, the image of the eagle as a bird flying high above the human world was constructed in the press. Attributes such as "sublime", "magnificent", "majestic", "big" and "mighty" were associated with the white-tailed eagle in the data for the period 1924–1945. In the bigrams, the expression "magnificent eagle" is emphasised. The most common trigram, a combination of three words, is "big bird white-tailed eagle" (in Finnish "*iso lintu merikotka*"), which occurs 27 times in the data, however, this is a reference to a folk song of the same name, which was played regularly from the beginning of radio broadcasting and is repeated, for example, in the lists of programmes published by the press.<sup>34</sup> The verse begins with the words "Big bird white-tailed eagle flying high" ("*Iso lintu merikotka korkealla lentää*"), but continues in a manner that suggests that the eagle is merely a metaphor for a loved one who is far away and distant, inaccessible: "Even though you're someone else's, I still love you" ("*Vaikka sä olet toisen oma, niin rakastan sua sentään*").<sup>35</sup> While personifying nature, the folk song builds an image of the eagle as a creature above human activity, capable of soaring in the heights far from the life on earth.

The majesty of the white-tailed eagle is also reflected in the countless sightings reported in the Finnish press. In 1930, the newspaper *Länsi-Suomi* wrote that "the white-tailed eagle, the proud and handsome king of the outer islands, its most magnificent ornament, has been forced to disappear."<sup>36</sup> The article was stained with pessimism regarding the fact that the conservation of the species had begun too late and that efforts were no longer sufficient to halt the trend; the white-tailed eagle was hovering on the brink of extinction and while there was a sense of admiration for the species, this admiration was mixed with a melancholic view that the rare sightings of the magnificent species could be the last. This melancholy may have been partially due to the fact that Bengt Berg's book *Sagan om de sista örnarna* was published in Finnish in 1930, and it received substantial press coverage in the form of advertisements by the publisher as well as reviews. Described as a "magnum opus", the book was published for Christmas

<sup>34</sup> See for example, *Rundradion. Programblad för varje vecka*, January 6, 1929, 10; *Kansan Lehti*, January 12, 1929, 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Pyrkijä* 8 (1935): 446.

<sup>36</sup> *Länsi-Suomi*, November 16, 1930, 4.

and many people bought it as a Christmas present.<sup>37</sup> In January 1931, the newspaper *Uusimaa* published a review of the book, in which a writer with the pen name E.L. made the following statement:

The persecution to which the eagle has been subjected in Sweden has been absurd and utterly senseless. Bengt Berg tells of many cases where an insane lust for murder and extermination has hastened the eagle's death or urged to rob its eggs. The final fate of the bird could not have been avoided, but its extinction would have been postponed into the future.<sup>38</sup>

The words “insane lust for murder and extermination” refer to a primitive, uncontrolled desire that had driven people to these very sad deeds. At the time of writing, the extinction appeared so inevitable that conservation measures would only be a postponement of the final fate to a more distant future. In the Finnish press in the early 1930s, the idea that the white-tailed eagle—regardless of conservation measures—was in such a precarious position that its population would never recover was a strong one. For example, in 1933, the newspaper *Hangon Sanomat* went on to write that “these mighty birds were on the verge of extinction”.<sup>39</sup> The paper speculated that the same fate awaited other large, spectacular species, especially birds of prey.

A particularly interesting text was the article published in *Uusi Suomi* on July 28, 1933 entitled “The last white-tailed eagle abandoned its nest in the Kemiö archipelago this spring”. The article began with the adjective “magnificent” in appreciation of the white-tailed eagle, but then continued as a sad account of the failure of conservation efforts. It was in the early 1930s that feelings about the eagle took on a particularly dark tone. The fate of the species appeared to be sealed:

The wild white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) is on the verge of extinction in Finland. Until a few years ago, there were several nests in the Kemiö archipelago, but now there are none left. Despite being protected, this handsome lord of the air has been destroyed and, finally, last summer the last female was shot. This spring, the male eagle had visited his former nest site on a steep cliff face, but then disappeared and has not returned. It will never return. There are now only three families of white-tailed eagles left in Finland, but even these are facing inexorable extinction. In Sweden, where many efforts have been made to protect them, the last of their species died out last year.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See for example *Aamulehti*, December 17, 1930, 3; *Kouvolan Sanomat*, December 20, 1930, 3; *Lapin Kansa*, December 23, 1930, 3.

<sup>38</sup> *Uusimaa*, January 14, 1931, 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Hangon Sanomat*, October 4, 1933, 4.

<sup>40</sup> “Viimeinen merikotka hylkäsi tänä keväänä synnyinpesänsä Kemiön saaristossa,” *Uusi Suomi*, July 28, 1933, 1.

The dark tone of the news was emphasised by the fact that a memorial statue was being erected for the eagle, which would serve as a future reminder of the cruel fate it suffered:

Some nature lovers in Helsinki, who wish to remain anonymous, have decided to erect a memorial statue to the white-tailed eagle on its last nesting rock in the Kemiö archipelago. It is also intended as a kind of conscience-striking gesture to people who often too ruthlessly and wantonly destroy birds and other natural rarities.<sup>41</sup>

The newspaper gave visibility to the article and published it on its front page, with a picture of Arthur Lönnfors, who was sculpting the eagle at the time and was also known as a taxidermist.<sup>42</sup> This news of the disappearance of the eagle and its immortalisation as a statue was published around Finland in the summer of 1933.<sup>43</sup> *Uusi Suomi* continued the news coverage by showing a picture of the completed statue in August 1933, which was to be erected in a prominent place in the outer archipelago along the shipping route.<sup>44</sup> From there it would remind passers-by of the “brave king bird of the air”, which no longer existed.

In the 1930s, the white-tailed eagle was already foreseen as a lost case a species that would disappear, with this sense of threat continuing in the press throughout the decade and even during the Second World War. It remains unclear whether wartime gave the white-tailed eagle an opportunity to live more peacefully than earlier and whether the crisis situation contributed to a calming of the persecution and harassment of eagles. Interestingly, there are a few positive references in the press of the 1940s. In 1942, in the middle of the war, the *Suomen Luonto* magazine reported an incident in the Bergö archipelago in Vaasa where a baby white-tailed eagle had been taken captive and raised to adulthood with the idea that it could be sold to a zoo; the crime was discovered, and the eagle’s captors were brought to justice. The news story ended with a pious hope: “Protecting the last representatives of this royal bird is a matter of honour for every good Islander, even if there is no threat of severe punishment for breaching the conservation order.”<sup>45</sup> Although the white-tailed eagle was almost declared dead, there was still hope.

41 “Viimeinen merikotka hylkäsi,” *Uusi Suomi*, July 28, 1933, 1.

42 On Lönnfors’ work see, e.g., *Luonnon ystävä* 6 (1914): 224.

43 See also *Aamulehti*, July 29, 1933, 7; *Uusi Aura*, July 29, 1933, 3; *Hufvudstadsbladet*, July 31, 1933, 4; *Tammerfors Aftonblad*, July 31, 1933, 3; *Vasabladet*, August 2, 1933, 1 *Pohjois-Savo*, August 12, 1933, 4.

44 *Uusi Suomi*, August 24, 1933, 1.

45 “Merikotkan vangitsijat oikeuteen,” *Suomen Luonto* 2 (1942): 71.

## “Now, it’s a Matter of Life and Death”

By the end of the Second World War, white-tailed eagles had been endangered for decades; although the bird had been protected, its population seemed to be recovering very slowly, if at all. If the eagle discourse is viewed from an emotional perspective, there was evidently a conflict or tension involved. The conflicting emotions also seem to have fed each other. The experience of threat was ever-present, and the more threatening the situation appeared, the more the majesty and extraordinary bravado of the eagle was emphasised. This experience of majesty was in part due to the rarity of the species. Seeing a white-tailed eagle was a rare fortune, becoming rarer as time went on.

If we look at the newspaper data as a whole from 1946 to 1979, the status of the white-tailed eagle appears to have been as challenging as it had been since the beginning of the century, or perhaps even more difficult. From this timespan, there are over 7,000 newspaper hits on the white-tailed eagle in the digitised material. Of course, it must be taken into account that only part of the post-World War II Finnish newspapers and magazines have been digitised. Although the digitisation rate is substantially lower than that of the pre-war material, the high number of references reflects not only the increase in the volume of the press but also the increasing publicity given to the difficulties of the white-tailed eagle.

The most common trigram in the Swedish-language data, a combination of three words, is “*havsörnar har skjutits*” (white-tailed eagles have been shot 28 times), thereby indicating that hostility towards the bird of prey was still strong and was reported in the press. Despite all the conservation efforts, dead birds continued to be occasionally found. The Finnish-language trigrams contain references to the fact that the birds were protected (“*merikotka on rauhoitettu*”) but simultaneously they were on the verge of extinction (“*merikotka on kuolemaisillaan*”). The proximity of extinction was particularly emphasised in the press in the early 1970s, and it appears that the press coverage reinforced concerns regarding the status of the species. In this respect, the publicity appears comparable to the situation in the early 1930s; it was not merely a question of news coverage or observations of white-tailed eagles published in the columns of newspapers, but of using the press publicity to shape opinion and arouse emotions. In 1973, for example, an announcement by the Finnish Fund of the World Wildlife Fund, which was widely published in the press, was employed to find support for the eagle. The text began by referring to the long history of persecution:

Finland’s largest bird of prey, the white-tailed eagle, is on the verge of extinction. The last representatives of the species, estimated to be around 30–40 individuals, have been forced to retreat away from human settlements to the outer archipelago.

The white-tailed eagle was already protected in 1926, but the law has failed to protect the eagle from the unjustified and often totally incomprehensible hatred of humans. Dozens of eagles have been shot. Their nests have been constantly destroyed. And their lives have been disturbed in many ways.<sup>46</sup>

The announcement was a cry of concern, intended to bring to the attention of the public at large that the threat of extinction was imminent. In practice, the situation was the same as it was in the early 1930s: the white-tailed eagle had been living on the brink of disappearance all these decades. The text went on to say that in 1972, the white-tailed eagle had only four baby birds in Finland that were able to fly.

The ad was a campaign in which the same text was published under different headlines in several newspapers. This particular text was entitled “Now, it’s a matter of life and death” (Figure 6.4). The text in other ads in the same campaign

**Nyt on kysymys elämästä tai kuolemasta.**

Suomen suurin petolintu, merikotka, on kuollessaan sukupuuttoon. Lajin viimeiset yksilöt, arviolta 30–40 kappaletta, ovat joutuneet vetäytyneisiin syrjään asutukselta ulkosairastoon.

Merikotka rauhoitettiin jo vuonna 1926. ...tutta laji ei ole pystynyt suojaamaan merikotkia ihmisten perusteettomalla ja usein täysin käsittämättömällä vihallalla. Merikotkia on ammuttu kymmeniittäin. Niiden pesiä on jatkuvasti tuhottu. Ja niiden elämää häiritään monin eri tavoin.

Ihminen lisäksi merikotkalla on myös toinen suuri vihollinen, luonnon saastuminen. Ravinnokseen käyttämiensä kalojen ja vesilintujen mukana merikotka saa yhä suurempia annoksia DDT:tä, ekhoppoa sekä muita ihmisen luontoon kylvämiä myrkyjä. Nämä myrkyt tekevät linnun vähitellen heikoksi ja kyvyttömäksi lisääntymään. Lintutieteilijät ovat tehneet ulkosairastossamme

useita havaintoja merikotkapareista, joiden pesin ei enää vuosiin ole ilmestynyt lainkaan munia. Ja vaikka muniminen olisiikin onnistunut, ovat munat niin ohutkuoria, etteivät ne kestä hautomista.

V. 1972 tiedettiin Suomen merikotkien saaneen lentoon vain neljä poikasta.

Yhdestoista heikot on siis todella käsillä. Merikotkalla ei ole enää paljon aikaa.

Maailman Luonnon Säätiön Suomen rahasto on ottanut tavoitteekseen vielä olemassaolevien merikotkien pesimäalueiden säilyttämisen. Yksi vanhimmista tällaisista alueista sijaitsee Ahvenanmaan saaristossa. Merikotkat ovat pesineet täällä saarella kenties jo vuosisatoja.

Tämäkin pesimäalue on nyt uhattuna: Saaren omistaja tarvitsee kipeästi rahaa. Siltä saadakseen hän oli päättänyt myydä saaren metsän.

Maailman Luonnon Säätiön Suomen Rahasto ehti kuitenkin väliin. Saattiin aikaan sopimus,

jonka mukaan saaren puusto säilytetään koskemattomana, mikäli maanomistaja saa siitä käyväin korvauksen.

Kysymys on nyt vain rahasta. Puuston ostamiseen ja muihin merikotkien suojelutoimiin lähimpään viiden vuoden aikana tarvitaan kaikkiaan 300 000 markkaa.

Jos haluat olla osallasi mukana pelastamassa merikotkia siitä uhkaavalta tuholta toimi näin: Lähettä lahjoitukseksi, markka tai enemmän postisiirtotilille 23 400-4 Maailman Luonnon Säätiön Suomen Rahasto, Helsinki. Jos markkalla olet lunastanut yhden neljänmetrin lisää elintilaa merikotkalle. Yli 10 markan lahjoituksesta saat tunnustukseksi erityisen lunastuskirjan.

Tule mukaan työhömmä. Auta meitä pelastamaan huomispäivän luonto.

Maailman Luonnon Säätiön Suomen Rahasto.

**Figure 6.4:** The announcement by the Finnish Fund of the World Wildlife Fund, published in *Uusi Suomi* on May 16, 1973. National Library of Finland.

<sup>46</sup> “Nyt on kysymys elämästä ja kuolemasta,” *Uusi Suomi*, May 16, 1973, 8. The same text was also published in, for example, *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, May 22, 1973, 11; *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 7, 1973, 8.

were “Land for white-tailed eagles for a mark per square metre”<sup>47</sup> and “Don’t let the white-tailed eagle die”.<sup>48</sup> The campaign was intended to raise funds for the rescue of the eagle, which had to begin immediately.

The text of the report draws attention to the “unjustified” and “incomprehensible” hatred that Finns have felt towards the eagle. Previous research has drawn attention to the conflict between humans and predators, such as that of historian Heta Lähdemäki who studied the relationship between humans and wolves, which also reflects this tension. Lähdesmäki’s research drew on newspaper material, which was rich in examples of predator hatred and its consequences and of wolves being killed.<sup>49</sup> As Lähdemäki indicates, the media played a strong role in building anti-wolf sentiment and fuelled negative emotions,<sup>50</sup> but in the case of the white-tailed eagle, the role of the media was somewhat different. Almost without exception, the killing of the birds was portrayed in a critical light, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. The news highlighted the victims of predation, and when this information was combined with the protected status of the eagle, the role of the media in shaping sentiments became more pronounced. On the other hand, it has also been the case that the white-tailed eagle rescue campaign deliberately exploited media publicity to build sympathy. The purpose of the World Wildlife Fund’s Finnish Fund was to raise economic resources to enhance systematic conservation work, which was the only way to promote the living conditions of the species. There was a significant difference between the situations in the 1930s and the 1970s; in the former, the media conveyed information and sentiments, but this influence could not be channelled into work that would have made the status of the eagle any easier in concrete terms.

It is evident from the press coverage that during the 1960s predator hatred was accompanied by a broader picture of environmental change. Tuomas Räsänen highlighted how even the corpses of dead eagles helped scientists to understand the overall impact of environmental change and the alarming consequences of manipulating nature.<sup>51</sup>

In the decades after the Second World War, the use of environmental toxins in agriculture had increased dramatically. Moreover, in everyday life in the West, the chemical industry’s products came into the market at such a rapid pace that there was no time to adequately explore their effects. The lives of white-tailed eagles at

47 “Maata merikotkille markalla neliö,” *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, May 29, 1973, 14.

48 “Älä anna merikotkan kuolla,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 16, 1973, 6.

49 Heta Lähdemäki, *Susien paikat. Ihminen ja susi 1900-luvun Suomessa* (PhD diss., Jyväskylä: Nykykulttuurin tutkimuskeskus, 2020), 49.

50 Lähdesmäki, *Susien paikat*, 114–15, 207–209.

51 Räsänen, “Does a Dead Wild Animal Have Agency?”, 93–104.

the top of the food pyramid were particularly affected by dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT),<sup>52</sup> the pivotal insecticide which had already been developed in the 1930s but became widely available after the Second World War. In Finland, DDT products were marketed from 1946 onwards, and insecticides were manufactured on this basis by the company Rikkihappo- ja Superfosfaattitehtaat Oy, the forerunner of today's Kemira.<sup>53</sup> The best-known poison was Täystuho SS, which was widely advertised on newspaper pages from the mid-1950s onwards.<sup>54</sup> DDT was used extensively in the fight against bedbugs and other harmful insects; it continued to be used *en masse* in the late 1950s and early 1960s, until its side effects were gradually understood and publicised.

In 1964, the newspaper *Uusi Suomi* reported on the findings and effects of chemical pesticides in the United States. The news was based on a discussion meeting of the Finnish Society for Nature Conservation, which had reported on the discoveries in the United States. The news item stated that “sterility is a common symptom in the southern US, e.g. all white-tailed eagles are sterile because they eat fish enriched with DDT or other chlorinated hydrocarbons,” while it was also noted that in Sweden, white-tailed eagles, harriers, and kestrels had suffered “considerable losses” for the same reason.<sup>55</sup>

Finnish research data only increased gradually in the 1960s and particularly in the 1970s. In addition to an effect on fertility and the number of fledglings, environmental chemicals also had an impact on the thinning of eggshells, which made successful nesting difficult. In the light of Finnish data, this was demonstrated, for example, by observations on white-tailed eagles collected in the Kvarken region.<sup>56</sup>

The World Wildlife Fund's campaign in Finland in 1973 was a crucial point of departure. Even before that, the feeding of white-tailed eagles with non-toxic meat had begun in the winter of 1971–1972,<sup>57</sup> work which proved to be slow but worthwhile and was most evidently fuelled by the sympathy that had been generated through newspaper publicity. In addition to sympathy, critical ecological

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52 Roy J. Barker, “Notes on some ecological effects of DDT sprayed on elms,” in *DDT, Silent Spring, and the Rise of Environmentalism: Classic Texts*, ed. Thomas R. Dunlap (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008), 65–67. For critical views, see e.g. Donald Robert, Richard Tren, Roger Bate and Jennifer Zambone, *The Excellent Powder: DDT's Political and Scientific History* (Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, 2010).

53 Lehtikoinen, Lemmetyinen, Vuorisalo and Rönkä, *Suomen lintutiede 1828–1974*, 431.

54 See for example *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 16, 1956, 14; *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 15, 1957, 25; *Kaskö Tidning*, June 25, 1958, 4.

55 “Hyönteismyrkyt ja kasvinsuojeluaineet uhkana luontaisille eläinkannoille. Biodiisiden vaikutukset meillä vielä vähäiset,” *Uusi Suomi*, May 13, 1964, 22.

56 Lehtikoinen, Lemmetyinen, Vuorisalo and Rönkä, *Suomen lintutiede 1828–1974*, 436.

57 Lehtikoinen, Lemmetyinen, Vuorisalo and Rönkä, *Suomen lintutiede 1828–1974*, 443.

awareness was required to tackle problems such as environmental toxins which was not only about the white-tailed eagle but also about the well-being of nature in general. DDT was gradually banned during the 1970s, first in arable and horticultural crops in 1972 and finally in housing, warehouses and livestock buildings in 1976. However, the effects of the poisons extended far into the future and their residues are still present in the environment today.<sup>58</sup>

The populations of white-tailed eagles recovered slowly which the opening quote of this chapter, from 1990, illustrates well. After almost two decades of rescue work, the white-tailed eagle remained a rare sight and one that was awe-inspiring to see but at the turn of the millennium, it became evident that the white-tailed eagle had finally been successfully rescued from the verge of extinction, a threat it had faced for virtually the entire twentieth century. In 2002, a journalist of the newspaper *Länsi-Savo* also put into words the change in emotions: “The decrease in persecution is gratifying. There is no longer any desire to cut off the brave flight of the symbol of freedom and the archipelago with a shotgun blast. The change in attitude is reflected in the views of the authorities. In the past, the white-tailed eagle used to be paid a bounty fee, but now it is a nature conservation offence to kill it. The indicative compensation value (for killing a bird) is €7,400, which is higher than that for any other bird in Finland.”<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion: The White-Tailed Eagle and the Emotional Power of Media

This chapter addressed the white-tailed eagle not only as a species that has graced Finnish skies for centuries but above all as a phenomenon that has sparked debate in newspaper columns. The media has acted as observers, recording sightings of the eagle, but have also actively participated in the public debate on the conservation of the eagle, describing the emotions aroused by the “majestic bird of prey”.

The publicity given to the white-tailed eagle reveals both continuities and ruptures. The issue of hostility towards the bird has been present throughout the period studied, from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. The shooting of birds of prey was prominent in the early twentieth century, but the issue has by no means disappeared from the news, with the extensive media material of this

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58 “Kielletyt ympäristömyrkyt vähentyneet Suomen ilmasta—mutta eivät hävinneet kokonaan,” Finnish Meteorological Institute, June 15, 2016. Accessed November 26, 2023. <https://www.ilmatieteenlaitos.fi/tiedote/197812843>.

59 Juha Hietanen, “Merikotka palaa Saimaalle,” *Länsi-Savo*, July 20, 2002, 23.

chapter containing news stories related to poaching up to the present day. However, at the same time, it appears that the press has contributed to distancing itself from the killing of birds through its journalistic activities. If in the 1910s and 1920s the firing of eagles was still presented in some ways as an understandable reaction, a struggle between hunter and fisherman for food, since the Second World War, the shooting of a protected species has been unambiguously unacceptable. The evidence suggests a change in attitude, although it might be specific to the white-tailed eagle and not necessarily generalisable to other predators. Predator hatred can be seen as a *longue durée* feature in emotional culture, which has remained strong and which still persists, for example, in the Finnish debate on wolves. The fact that Finland is a country that underwent a relatively late urbanisation has probably contributed to this; it is only since the turn of the 1960s and 1970s that the majority of Finns have been urban dwellers, and a large number of Finns have a close relationship with rural livelihoods and, thus, a special relationship with predators. Simultaneously, this interpretation, at least in the case of the white-tailed eagle, can be called into question; indeed, Thorsten Renvall noted in the early twentieth century that man and eagle were not rivals.

With regard to the newspaper material, it appears that the feelings attached to white-tailed eagles were species-specific until the Second World War, with the focus on the handsome, majestic species rather than its role in the ecosystem. In the post-World War II era, and particularly in the awakening of environmental awareness in the 1960s and 1970s, the role of the white-tailed eagle became more emphasised because, like other predators, it was at the top of the food chain and, thus, it became a symbol of a wider environmental change. The question of safeguarding the white-tailed eagle was also about fighting for the environment in general.

While the emotions associated with the white-tailed eagle emphasised the sublime, unique nature of the experience, it appears obvious that the emotional media coverage of the eagle has eclipsed that of other species. As a large bird, the white-tailed eagle has been a spectacular subject for journalistic work and, thus, has discursive power; the white-tailed eagle often appears in newspaper illustrations as well. If the eagle has dominated the airspace, in a sense it has also dominated the media space. It has stirred emotions more than smaller, more modest and inconspicuous birds, which have disappeared while the focus has been on the rescue of a single species. On the other hand, perhaps it is this symbolic role that has indirectly helped other species and parts of the complex ecosystem machinery that otherwise would have been denied space by the media.

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