

Wildlife on Mount Baldo

Golden Eagle

Order *Accipitriformes*
 Family *Accipitridae*
 Genus *Aquila*
 Species *A. chrysaetos* L.



The golden eagle is about 80 cm long and can have a wingspan as wide as 2 meters. Wings have flight feathers shaped in a characteristic way that make them suitable for soaring flight; the tail is rounded. Plumage is brown with golden feathers on the nape, and is similar in both sexes. Females are usually larger than males. Golden eagles are large diurnal birds of prey, with a powerful hooked bill made for breaking and tearing bones apart; they have short toes ending in massive claws used for both grasping and killing prey.

Golden eagles nest regularly on the sheer rock cliffs of Mount Baldo. A few decades ago it seemed they had disappeared from the area, but at the end of the Seventies they were back nesting in the same exact area that had been identified many years prior, in a cranny of a rock face protected by bushes. Their return is probably due to the fact that their environment has become increasingly more appealing to them thanks to the greater amount of prey and growing population of marmots.

These birds tend to be solitary. They feed mostly on mammals of different species, particularly rabbits, marmots, young deer and chamois, squirrels and mice; but also birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects and carrion. They glide and dive in order to catch prey by surprise. In spring females lay 1-3 eggs that are incubated by both parents for 44-45 days. Juvenile golden eagles attain independence after about 2-3 months of age.

