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Abstracts

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

THE INFLUENCE OF SALINITY ON PROVISIONING RATES AND NESTLING GROWTH IN BALD EAGLES IN THE LOWER CHESAPEAKE BAY

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Abstract. We measured provisioning and growth patterns in Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) chicks from nests in two salinity zones in the lower Chesapeake Bay. Nestlings in mesohaline reaches experienced higher per capita consumable energy provisioning rates and had higher instantaneous growth rates compared to nestlings in tidal-fresh salinity zones. These results suggest that Bald Eagles nesting along mesohaline reaches are more successful at meeting the energetic demands of brood rearing compared to pairs nesting along tidal-fresh reaches, a finding consistent with documented higher reproductive rates and proportion of three-chick broods along mesohaline reaches compared to tidal-fresh reaches. The results of this study have important conservation implications for Bald Eagles by addressing issues related to variation in habitat quality within a continuous ecosystem and the determination of core breeding zones.

Key words: anadromous, Bald Eagle, Chesapeake Bay, growth, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, provisioning, salinity.