

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

Our national bird is being poisoned. The Biden administration must follow California's lead to stop it

BY LISA OWENS VIANI SPECIAL TO THE SACRAMENTO BEE

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The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife referred poaching charges to a county prosecutor after a dog and bald eagle fell victim to the suspect's illegal trap.

BY WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

On the heels of a new study finding [rat poison in the majority of bald eagles](#), our country's emblematic national bird, it is time for the Biden Administration to follow California's groundbreaking lead and place a national moratorium on deadly second generation anticoagulant rat poisons (SGARs).

Last fall, California passed [AB 1788](#), which went into effect on January 1. Introduced by Assemblymember Richard Bloom (D-Santa Monica), the bill prohibits most uses of SGARs. Meanwhile, the California Department of Pesticide Reevaluation is studying

the impacts of these deadly products, which are harming animals throughout California (and other states), including non-target species like eagles, hawks, owls, foxes, mountain lions and bobcats.

A new study by the University of Georgia and others just published in [PLOS One](#) found that 83% of bald eagles and 77% of golden eagles tested positive for SGARs. The livers of 116 bald eagles and 17 golden eagles sent to the university's Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study by federal and state wildlife agencies from 2014 through 2018 were tested for anticoagulant rat poisons. The carcasses came from all over the United States —



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SKAGIT VALLEY BALD EAGLE INTERPRETIVE CENTER

most bald eagles came from eastern states and most golden eagles came from western states with the highest numbers coming from Pennsylvania, Florida and Georgia.

The second generation brodifacoum, the most potent second-generation compound, was detected in 107 of the samples. Other SGARs found were bromadiolone, difethialone and difenacoum. First generation anticoagulants, which take longer to build up in an animal's body, were found in three samples.

One study found that these products caused birth defects in young owls. A recent study by a University of Madison-Wisconsin graduate student found anticoagulants in the ovaries of seven owls, showing that SGARs could possibly impact reproduction. There are many other more sustainable solutions to controlling rodents than using deadly SGARs.

We hope that the California Department of Pesticide Regulation will conduct a thorough, objective, scientific review of these products. Myriad scientific studies show that if these products do not kill an animal outright, they often cause other impacts, such as weakening the animal's immune system; slowing its ability to avoid predators, cars and other dangers and bleeding out from ordinarily minor injuries.

Bald eagles had a close call in the mid-twentieth century when DDT caused widespread nesting failure. The species subsequently declined in historic strongholds like Florida and the Chesapeake Bay and was locally extirpated in much of the United States. After the insecticide was banned, populations rebounded and the bald eagle was removed from the federal endangered species list in 2007.

We do not want to relive that history. SGARs cannot become our new DDT.

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