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## Barack Obama refuses to protect the the bald eagle

A symbol of America, the bald eagle, is under threat, but Barack Obama is refusing to protect it.

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By Geoffrey Lean

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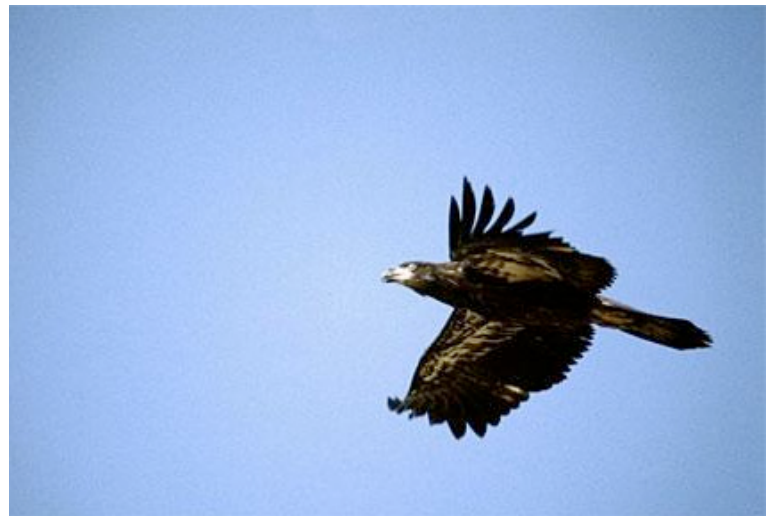
Here's some ammunition for those hardline Obama opponents who question his patriotism. His administration is refusing to protect an endangered population of the nation's symbol, the bald eagle.

Only 39 breeding pairs of the desert nesting bald eagle, which lives in Arizona, still survive. Smaller than other bald eagles – and long recognised as biologically different – it is threatened with extinction

It is a casualty of its cousins' recovery. Despite its symbolic adoption in 1782, the bald eagle had a rough time. Settlers tried to exterminate it, and it was even fed to pigs. Its fortunes began to revive after Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* revealed its poisoning by DDT and it was one of the first species protected by endangered species legislation.

Populations recovered so strongly nationwide that the bird was taken off the protected list in 2007, but the desert nesting bald eagle – whose habitat is rapidly disappearing – remained vulnerable. Conservationists pressed for it to remain listed, but the Bush administration refused and now the Obama one has done the same.

"Just as if Bush were in office, political hacks in Washington DC are trying once again to throw our eagles into the garbage for their developer patrons," exclaims Dr Robin Silver, of the Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity.



The bald eagle: under threat, but without support in the White House

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To make their case, Obama's bitterest enemies would have to forget the inconvenient truth that it was his Republican predecessor that first refused the eagle protection. But I don't suppose that would trouble them unduly.