

TALKING POINTS: SBO116 - State Bird of Prey Designation

[<https://le.utah.gov/~2022/bills/static/SBO116.html>]

Why does this bill matter? Why do we need to designate a state of Utah Bird of Prey? Isn't it just a token symbol for a state that already has plenty of them?

Yes, but symbols do matter.

Designating the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) as Utah's state bird of prey is a symbol that matters for these reasons:

Our current state bird is the California Seagull (*Larus Californicus*). Not all segments of our state's population are intimately connected to the species, although it is important to our region, particularly in its relevance as a story from Latter-day Saint pioneer history.

Designating a state bird of prey, as Idaho has (with the Peregrine Falcon in 2004) and New Hampshire has (Redtail Hawk in 2019) allows our state to honor the significance of the story of the seagull, while adding a powerful natural symbol that can resonate with all Utahns.

Worldwide, Golden eagles represent honesty, truth, majesty, strength, courage, wisdom, power and freedom. Hunters and sportsmen can respect the largest hunting bird in North America. Conservationists can look to an apex predator and an indicator species to frame the health of ecosystems. Most of all, Native Americans attach significance to the bird and its feathers, and consider the Golden eagle to be a messenger of the Gods. As a state symbol, the Golden eagle can provide opportunities for Utahns to respect our relationship to the natural world.

Conservation can be complicated, yet principles of respecting our fragile ecosystems can remind Utahns to respect our quality of life. Golden eagles, and the other native and transitory Utah birds of prey they represent, provides a unique opportunity to "look up" and see a species that is widely

revered. Golden eagles can provide opportunities for education about our natural world.