



Midwinter eagle surveys were initiated in 1979 by the U.S. Geological Survey to develop a population index of wintering bald eagles in the lower 48 states, determine their distribution, and identify important, previously unrecognized wintering habitat. In 1983, two midwinter eagle survey routes were established on the INL Site, one encompassing the northern portion and the other the southern portion. In addition to eagles, the INL Site surveys were expanded to include all raptors, corvids (such as ravens and crows), and shrikes. To support this expanded monitoring effort, teams of INL biologists conduct annual surveys each January along the two established routes. These surveys are designed to detect any target species, including those perched, hovering, or soaring. For each survey, the number of individuals of each species is recorded to help track long-term trends in abundance and distribution.

Since 2001, 20 bird species have been recorded along both the North and South survey routes, including several designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need by Idaho Fish and Game, such as ferruginous hawks, golden eagles, loggerhead shrikes, and short-eared owls. Overall, the most frequently observed species are common ravens and rough-legged hawks. The median number of bald eagles and golden eagles observed during a single survey is two and seven, respectively. The highest count of bald eagles occurred in 2008 with seven individuals, while the peak count for golden eagles was 36 in 2017.