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Scottish Scouts launch new initiative to safeguard the future of Golden Eagles in the UK

Working closely with the groundbreaking South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, a Scottish Scout group is launching the first ever Golden Eagle Champions initiative to help safeguard the future of Golden Eagles in the UK.

The Scottish Borders Innerleithen Scout Group will become the UK's first ever Golden Eagle Champions, learning from experts and getting to see some of these iconic birds themselves. The Borders' Scouts will also be designing a special badge that the group can earn as part of their work on this project.

Speaking on the launch of the initiative Philip Munro, Community Outreach Officer for the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project said: "It is fantastic to see our Golden Eagles thriving and fending for themselves only 5 months after their release. Significant community support has been key to this early success and will continue to play a vital role in ensuring that Golden Eagles truly flourish in the south of Scotland.

"We are absolutely delighted to be working with the Scottish Borders Scouts, and their trailblazing Innerleithen Group, on the UK's first ever Golden Eagle Champions initiative. The future of conservation depends on initiatives like this that encourage young people to get involved and make a difference. Their involvement will truly lead the way for other local Scout Groups and make a huge contribution to helping to safeguarding the future of this iconic species in the south of Scotland and beyond."

Speaking on the launch of the project, Chris Kennedy, a volunteer with Scouts Scotland, currently leading their Innerleithen Scout Group, said:

"We are really excited to be part of this incredible project to help protect Scotland's Golden Eagles. This is a fantastic opportunity for our Scouts to take a hands on approach, working together with other people across our community as well as some of the country's leading wildlife and raptor experts on such a hugely important issue. The young people involved really will get a chance to impact on our natural heritage for generations to come, and is a real example of how Scouts can make a difference in the communities they live in.

"And the opportunity isn't just for our young people; our adult volunteers at our Innerleithen Group will also get the chance to be involved in the project so if this sounds like something you would like to help with then we'd love to hear from you."

Steve Backshall, Scouts Ambassador said:

“This is an amazing opportunity for Scouts in the Scottish Borders to be a part of the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project. They will be playing a vital role in the continued protection of many unique and important species, such as Scotland’s Golden Eagles.”

Francesca Osowska, Scottish Natural Heritage’s Chief Executive, said: “Congratulations to Innerleithen Scout Group for being the UK’s first-ever Golden Eagle Champions! This is a wonderful programme, and I’m sure they’ll love seeing and learning about these magnificent birds right in the Borders. It’s fantastic to see the golden eagles doing so well in South Scotland, and we’re thrilled to help return them to places where they were once an important part of our wildlife.”

The pioneering South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project has been set up to address low numbers of Golden Eagles in the South of Scotland. Project partners RSPB Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Southern Uplands Partnership, have been working together for more than eleven years to bring it to fruition. Funded by The National Lottery, project partners, the Scottish Government and local LEADER Programmes, the initiative is a key project under the Scottish Government’s 2020 Challenge for Scottish Biodiversity (which sets out a route map to protect and restore Scotland’s biodiversity).

The Scouts and Cubs Golden Eagle Champions will:

- learn about Golden Eagles from wildlife professionals at the South of Scotland Golden Eagles Project.
- get out and about in the countryside discovering first-hand how these magnificent birds of prey live and survive.
- further their knowledge of the local environment and the abundance of wildlife on their doorstep.

For the latest news on the project visit: www.goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk

Ends

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Notes to Editors

About the South of Scotland Golden Eagles Project

- In the first of a series of groundbreaking translocations, conservationists at the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project successfully transported three Golden Eagle chicks (named Edward, Beaky and Emily) from the Scottish Highlands to a secret location in the Southern Uplands of Scotland in August 2018.
- The young birds have settled into their new homes and are now beginning to fend for themselves.
- The £1.3 million project, hosted by the Southern Uplands Partnership, is now calling on volunteers across the south of Scotland (locals and visitors alike) to support project staff and Scottish Raptor Study Group members in monitoring and recording sightings of the birds.

- Children and young people in schools across the South of Scotland adopted the birds, naming them Edward, Beaky and Emily.
- Currently there are only between two and four pairs of Golden Eagle across Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, however a supporting study by Scottish Natural Heritage shows that the local habitat is suitable for up to 16 pairs.
- The project has also identified that the best way of enhancing this fragmented and vulnerable population of golden eagles is through increasing the supply of young eagles, which will eventually recruit into the breeding population. Recent satellite tagging work of golden eagles in Scotland has shown that the south of Scotland golden eagle population is greatly isolated from larger populations of this species from the Highlands.
- For the next four years, the Project will bring between three and ten young eagles south.
- The project team is using tried and tested methods for rear and release of the young golden eagles derived from previous white-tailed eagle and red kite reintroduction projects, and through the cooperation of raptor experts and estates.
- The project team has collected single eagle chicks from broods of two young in the Highlands and raised and released them in an undisclosed location in the Moffat Hills area.
- Work is focussing on ensuring former and potential nesting sites are re-occupied; to identify any additional habitat management measures that will bring further improvements in food supplies in these areas; and wider work with local communities, schools, and enterprises to bring much wider benefits.
- Each released golden eagle has been satellite tagged to ensure the project team builds up as much information as they can on the ranging behaviour, survival, and health of the birds.
- Project staff are working with a variety of expert advisers, including specialists from the Edinburgh University Dick Vet School, and from Ireland and Spain who have been heavily involved in successful raptor reintroduction programmes.
- The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project is:
 - supported by Scottish Land & Estates, RSPB Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Southern Uplands Partnership.
 - funded by:
 - £1.37 million from The National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund;
 - the Scottish Government;
 - more than £150,000 match funding from Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders LEADER programmes .
 - licenced to undertake the work by Scottish Natural Heritage.
- The [Scottish Raptor Study Group](#) are supplying considerable expertise of golden eagle conservation to the project.
- Thanks to National Lottery players, the Heritage Lottery Fund invests money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife.

About Scouts Scotland and the Scottish Borders

- Around 1000 young people enjoy Scouting in the Scottish Borders supported by 400 amazing volunteers, but they are always in need of more supporters. Several of their groups have waiting lists as so many girls and boys want to enjoy the fun, friendship and adventure Scouting offers.
- Scottish Borders Scouts have a variety of roles either working directly with the children or behind the scenes making everything come together. They offer flexible volunteering so volunteers only give the time they can afford. Whether that's a few hours a week, a month or even a year.

- As Scouts, we believe in preparing young people with skills for life. We encourage our young people to do more, learn more and be more.
- Each week, we give almost 40,000 young people in Scotland the opportunity to enjoy fun and adventure while developing the skills they need to succeed
- Innerleithen Cubs will design a special Golden Eagle Champions badge.
- For more information about Innerleithen Scouts plus our other thirteen groups across the Borders, visit www.borderscouts.org.uk
- Adventurer Bear Grylls is the UK Chief Scout - <https://scouts.org.uk/about-us/organisational-information/chief-scout/>
- Other high profile Scout Ambassadors include Olympians, Astronauts, Explorers and TV presenters including Helen Glover, Ellie Simmonds, Tim Peake, Steve Backshall and Warwick Davies -: <https://scouts.org.uk/about-us/ambassadors>

