

Scouts Golden Eagle Champions soar into National Awards

Scouts from Innerleithen were flying high this week when they heard that they have been shortlisted for a national youth work award for their innovative Golden Eagle Champion Award. The group have been shortlisted for the Environment and Conservation for the National Youth Work Awards 2020.

The young people developed the UK's first "Golden Eagle Champion" award, complete with a badge and a certificate in partnership with Scottish Borders Scouts and the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project.

In order to become a Golden Eagle Champion, the young people had to learn about raptors, build enormous eyries and developed specialist tree climbing skills to allow them to get a birds' eye view on their local countryside. They also got the chance to meet a golden eagle which had a huge impact on the young people in the group.

Chris Kennedy, a volunteer from Innerleithen Scout Group, said:

"We're excited that our amazing 'Golden Eagle Champions' have been shortlisted for a Youthlink Scotland Award. Wildlife experts at the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project worked closely with our volunteers to develop a fun and adventurous activity programme. Our project proved to be such a success, that hundreds more Scouts across the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway are about to learn about Golden Eagle conservation and wider raptor protection. That kind of legacy makes us all very proud."

Philip Munro, Community Outreach Officer for the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project said:

"We are absolutely delighted to hear that the Innerleithen Scout Group has been shortlisted for a Youthlink Scotland Award. It is very well deserved - It was fantastic to work with this inspiring 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 support makes a huge contribution to helping to safeguard the future of iconic species like the Golden Eagle in the south of Scotland and beyond."

The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project was set up to address low numbers of golden eagles in the South of Scotland. Project partners RSPB Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates, Forestry 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).

Ends

For further information contact....

Notes

Link to video

About Scouts Scotland

- 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. We're talking about teamwork, leadership and resilience – skills that have helped Scouts become everything from teachers and social workers to astronauts and Olympians.
- Scouting is the largest co-educational youth movement in Scotland.
- We are the Scouts and everyone is welcome here regardless of background, race, religion or gender.
- Scouting offers over 200 activities from abseiling and coding to drama and archery. All made possible by the efforts of more than 12,000 volunteer leaders in Scotland.
- At present there are more than 4,600 young people on waiting lists in Scotland. Becoming an adult volunteer is fun, rewarding and good for your CV. Adult volunteers receive full training, support and many opportunities for adventure as well.
- Adults working in Scouting contribute in excess of 364 million hours of voluntary work each year to their local communities across the United Kingdom.

About the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project

- Before the project began, there was 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 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 will be 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, Scottish Forestry, 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 the Scottish Government and the European Union – LEADER 2014-2020 programme;
 - Scottish Power Renewables.
 - 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.