



**Immediate release**

## **Golden Eagles Visit HMP Dumfries**



As part of a ground breaking conservation initiative, community engagement officers from the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project recently visited HMP Dumfries to spread the word about the project and support the prison's efforts to help prisoners maintain relationships with their families.

Thousands of people across the south of Scotland and beyond have now taken the project's Eagles under their wings and shown support for the project through the project's community engagement work and volunteering opportunities.

On their visit to HMP Dumfries, recognised as one of the safest prisons in Scotland, community engagement officers from the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project told prison officers, inmates and their families how they plan to boost numbers of golden eagles in the Borders and how this will benefit the wider ecosystem and tourism in the south of Scotland. Supporting the initiative, Ray Lowden from Kielder Bird of Prey Centre enabled the group to get up close and personal with Iris the Barn Owl, Gizmo the Eagle Owl, Mark the Turkey Vulture and, the star of the show, MacLoud, a 2-year-old, male Golden Eagle.

Speaking about the initiative Philip Munro, Community Outreach Officer for the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project said: "Significant community support plays a vital role in our project. We need to keep building on this so that we can ensure that we can see even more of these magnificent birds across the south of Scotland's skies. We were absolutely delighted to visit HMP Dumfries to support this work, and the prison's efforts to help prisoners maintain relationships with their families. The continued support and enthusiasm from businesses and institutions like HMP Dumfries will truly help to protect iconic species like Golden Eagles for generations to come."

“We are also incredibly grateful for the support from Ray Lowden at the Kielder Bird of Prey Centre. He really helps us to bring people face to face with the Golden Eagle, so they can truly realise the presence and beauty of this magnificent icon of Scotland. Ray’s experience of over 30 years working with falconry birds and the public ensures that people experience quality encounters that are never to be forgotten.”

Speaking about his experience, one inmate said: “The most breathtakingly, astonishing thing about all of these birds of prey was the male golden eagle who had roughly a six foot wing span. He was so majestic. I was astonished to learn from the people who brought in these amazing birds, what they are doing to re-introduce these amazing birds into the hills of the Dumfries and Galloway Hills and Forests. I will never forget that day, it’s the first time I have ever been so close to a Golden Eagle and can’t wait to see more of them flying around the surrounding area”.

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, Scottish Forestry, 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, Scottish Power Renewables, 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).

For the latest news on the project visit: [www.goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk](http://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, 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 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.

