



Immediate release

Musselburgh children take part in new initiative to help safeguard the future of Golden Eagles in the South of Scotland

A group of home schooled children from Musselburgh recently took part in the groundbreaking South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project to help safeguard the future of Golden Eagles in the UK.

The group of children, who were joined by children from the Scottish Borders and Central Scotland, are the first in East Lothian to take part in the pioneering initiative, learning from experts and creating a large golden eagle on Musselburgh Beach.

The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project has been set up to address concerns about low numbers of golden eagles, which play a vital role in helping to maintain a healthy local ecosystem, in the south of Scotland. To date over 10,000 volunteers and special project participants of all ages (aged 4 to 92) have taken the golden eagles under their wings, as they've supported the project through a wide range of tasks and initiatives.

Speaking about his work with the home-schooled children in Musselburgh, Rick Taylor, Community Outreach Officer for the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project said: "Significant community support, like that of the families today, plays a vital role in helping golden eagles flourish once again in the south of Scotland. We were absolutely delighted to see the passion and enthusiasm from the children and young people today. It certainly gives us great hope for the future. Their involvement and continued enthusiasm will truly help to protect iconic species like golden eagles for generations to come."

Speaking about her involvement Grace (age 13), said: "I loved making the Eagle and field sketching. I drew an Oystercatcher. I'd love to do this again."

Nathanael (age 11) added: "I found the day really fun and I'd definitely do it again."

The South of Scotland Golden Eagle project team has successfully translocated four golden eagles from the Scottish Highlands to the south of Scotland. The four birds have settled into their new habitats and are now fending for themselves. Support from volunteers, participants and local communities plays a pivotal role in helping the iconic species continue to grow and thrive in the area.

Project partners include RSPB Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates, Scottish Forestry, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Southern Uplands Partnership. Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, 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

Ends

For further information contact:

Kirsty Innes, tel 07790 910 646, email kirsty@kirstyinnespr.com

Notes to Editors

About the South of Scotland Golden Eagles 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;
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