

Immediate release

Pioneering conservation initiative and leading Scottish estate open UK's first golden eagle information point



A pioneering conservation charity initiative and leading Scottish estate have joined forces to open the UK mainland's first ever golden eagle information point, dedicated to telling the story of one of the country's most iconic wildlife species in the south of Scotland.

Designed by award-winning exhibition designers Studioarc, in partnership with the groundbreaking South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, the new Eyrrie: Eagle Information Point is located in the new Waterwheel Tearoom in Philiphaugh Estate, near Selkirk.

The estate, which is accredited by Wildlife Estates Scotland for its biodiversity work, is also home to a modern Hydro Electric Station, a Salmon Viewing Centre, a historic battlefield, enchanting walled garden, wildlife walks and gin distillery.

Through a series of fun and informative displays, including a Guess Who style game, visitors to the Eyrrie at the Waterwheel Tearoom will discover more about the importance of golden eagles to the south of Scotland and how they can help to address low numbers of this iconic species in the area. They can also view some of the latest video footage following the Project's first four successfully translocated eagles and learn about some of the other amazing raptor species that can be seen nearby.

The development has been funded by the Fallago Rig Fund, the Philiphaugh Estate, the South of Scotland Economic Partnership (SOSEP), The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, RSPB Scotland and the Lothian and Borders Raptor Study Group.

Opening the new Eyrrie Information Point in the recently completed extension to the Waterwheel Tearooms, Sir Michael Strang Steel, who manages the Philiphaugh Estate said: "As a keen participant in the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, we are delighted to offer a place for the UK's first Golden Eagle Information Point. Philiphaugh are already proud members of Wildlife Estates Scotland, which accredits those farms, estates and other landholdings, who are doing their very best work in wildlife management and biodiversity and the hosting of the Eyrrie further compliments this accreditation.

“A truly fascinating and engaging visitor hub has been created and I would encourage locals and tourists alike to visit and discover more about this beautiful species and how they can help to ensure golden eagles will once again soar over the skies of the south of Scotland.”

Philip Munro, Community Engagement Officer at the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, who led the design of the The Eyrie, added: “We would like to thank Philiphaugh for giving us the opportunity to create our permanent new interactive Eyrie: Eagle Information Point on their estate.

“Support from locals, visitors, funders and estates like Philiphaugh plays a pivotal role in helping us to ensure the small and fragmented population of golden eagles in the south of Scotland continues to grow and thrive. We’ve had phenomenal support from over 10,000 participants to date, and The Eyrie will significantly help us build on this to ensure that we can all see even more of this magnificent species in southern skies for many years to come.”

Welcoming the new addition to the Waterwheel Tearooms, VisitScotland Chief Executive Malcolm Roughead said: “With its spectacular scenery, unique natural environment and year round wildlife calendar, Scotland is one of the best places in the world for watching wildlife. The launch of the new Eyrie: Eagle Information Point for The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project is a fantastic addition to tourism in Scotland that will also help protect this iconic species for future generations to enjoy.

“As tourism restarts, it is more important than ever that we ensure that our stunning landscapes and wildlife are well protected. We need to strive to maintain economic activity whilst minimising negative environmental and social impact. Tourism is a force for good – creating economic and social value in every corner of Scotland and enhancing the wellbeing of everyone who experiences it. Tourism makes Scotland richer, economically and socially, and without it Scotland would be a much poorer place.”

Jemma Reid, Project Manager, SSDA, added: “With the South of Scotland blessed with rich birdlife, we welcome the opening of Philiphaugh’s unique new Eyrie Information Point. Visitors first encounters with Scottish wildlife experiences often start here in the South of Scotland, so it’s wonderful that every visitor to the region can learn about golden eagles when they are here.”

The Eyrie: Eagle Information Point is based in Philiphaugh’s Waterwheel Tearoom. It features interactive, and audio-visual displays, alongside the Guess The Raptor game and a series of information panels telling the story of golden eagles in the south of Scotland. It’s opening hours are 10am - 4pm, Monday to Sunday. Members of the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project team will be at The Eyrie on Wednesday 19 May from 10am and 2pm to welcome visitors and answer questions.

It was part funded by the South of Scotland Economic Partnership, which paved the way for South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), the economic and community development agency for Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders.

Chair of SOSE, Professor Russel Griggs OBE, said: “The development of the new Philiphaugh Eagle Information Point will support the estate’s long-term ambition to increase visitor numbers, which in turn should benefit other local attractions.

“As restrictions continue to ease, we are committed to working with South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), VisitScotland, Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council to support our communities and businesses to reopen safely and welcome back visitors to our region.”

South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project partners include NatureScot, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates, Scottish Forestry, and the Southern Uplands Partnership. Funding comes from 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 has a route map to protect and restore Scotland’s biodiversity).

For the latest project news, or to donate to the charity initiative, visit:

www.goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk

Ends

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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 eagles across Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, however a supporting study by NatureScot shows that the local habitat is suitable for up to 16 pairs.
- Since 2018, the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project has successfully translocated four golden eagles from the Scottish Highlands to the south of Scotland. The four birds have all settled into their new habitats and are fending for themselves. The Covid-19 restrictions prevented the charity from translocating eagle chicks in 2020, but they plan to translocate more in 2021.
- During the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, Beaky was the first of the project’s eagles to venture south of the border and visit the North Pennines area, where there have been no breeding pairs of eagles for many years. She was also later seen demonstrating potential courtship behaviour with Skan, one of the male eagles translocated to the area by the project.
- The project has 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 two to -three 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, NatureScot, and The Southern Uplands Partnership.
 - funded by:
 - £1.37 million from The National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund;
 - the Scottish Government; and
 - Scottish Power Renewables.
 - licenced to undertake the work by NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage).
- The project also received more than £150,000 match funding from the Scottish Government and the European Union – LEADER 2014-2020 programme.
- 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.
- In 2019, the project revealed that 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.
- Those who have participated in the initiative to date come from a range of backgrounds and organisations, including: the UK's first ever Golden Eagle Scout Champions at the Scottish Borders Scouts; over 360 pupils from primary schools across the south of Scotland and one in the Scottish Highlands; Borders College; the Scottish Raptor Study Group; Kielder Bird of Prey Centre; HMP Dumfries; and local businesses like Wild Tree Adventure.

