



# Protecting an icon of wild Scotland





# Homeward

Native to the south of Scotland, golden eagles form a crucial part of the ecosystem. These awe-inspiring raptors have long been admired for their mastery of flight and strength, and have a historic relationship with the landscape, with many hills and woods named after them.

But the once healthy population of golden eagles in the south has fallen to as low as just three breeding pairs. Historic persecution and changes to land use has put these reclusive and vulnerable birds at risk of disappearing from their native homeland. The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project aims to boost the population by relocating young birds from the Highlands and Islands, where stronghold populations are larger, to reinforce the vulnerable population in the south. A licence from Scottish Natural Heritage allows the project to translocate up to ten young eagles each year, across a five-year period. The first four birds that our team successfully translocated to the area – Emily, Beaky, Edward and Skan – are now thriving in southern skies.



# On the move

Translocations involve the movement of a species from one place to another in order to conserve its population. Eagles being translocated are collected from twin eyries; one bird remains with the parents, while the other makes the journey south to one of our custom-built aviaries in the Moffat Hills.

[goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk](http://goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk)

1

## **Eyrie watch**

Scottish Raptor Study Group members, who monitor the golden eagles' nests (called eyries), tell us where twins are present and when they are between six and eight weeks old. Young eagles are collected at this age as they are almost fully feathered, so able to keep themselves warm, and have the strength to grip and tear their own food.

2

## **The collection**

Working closely with estate owners and managers, the collection is made by our eagle officer, a vet and an assistant, whilst an experienced climber assists with access to the eyrie. We keep the team small to minimise disturbance.

3

## **Health check 'n' go**

The young eagle is given a health check by the vet at the eyrie location, and has a metal ring tag (featuring an identification number) fitted to its lower leg. In a specially-constructed travel box, firmly strapped into a ventilated vehicle, the young eagle begins its journey to an aviary at a location in the Moffat Hills. Here the bird will undergo another health check before being left in the aviary.

4

## **Keeping an eagle eye on the birds**

For the next six weeks, the golden eagle is fed regularly with a range of food it would be provided with in the wild. Spy-holes in the aviaries allow our eagle officer to monitor the birds throughout their stay without them being alert to human presence.

5

## **Track and release**

Before release, the bird is fitted with a satellite tracker by experienced, licensed professionals. This allows us to learn more about their behaviour so we can support their well-being. Two days later the eagle is released into the skies of the south of Scotland and monitored by the team.



# 2.2m

A golden eagle's wingspan can reach up to 2.2 metres.



# 170mph

A golden eagle's dive, known as a stoop, can reach speeds of around 170 miles per hour.

# 33yrs

The world's oldest known wild golden eagle was a 33-year-old Scottish male, in Sutherland.

# 10x

A golden eagle's grip-strength is ten times stronger than the average adult, human male.

# 3

Scottish clan chiefs displayed their status by wearing three eagle feathers in their caps.

# 8x

A golden eagle's eyesight is thought to be eight times sharper than that of a human.



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## It takes a team

The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project is an initiative supported by the Southern Uplands Partnership. We work with local communities to reinvigorate a sense of pride and guardianship in our feathered neighbours.

Our team includes two community outreach officers, who run our Eagle Schools programme and Eagle Champions partnership with Scouts Scotland. They also educate people about our work through talks, walks, events and activities.

The success of the project relies on collaboration with landowners, managers, and conservationists to ensure that everyone involved in translocations is informed and fairly represented, and that local economies can benefit. Find out more about our educational work and ways you can get involved in the project at [goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk](http://goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk)





# Our partners

This project is made possible thanks to our partners:  
The Southern Uplands Partnership, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates, Scottish Forestry, and Scottish Natural Heritage.





# Help us soar

Interested in becoming a volunteer? Want to take part in our Eagle Schools programme? Or attend our Raptor Identification Workshop? Your support could help golden eagles to thrive in the south of Scotland.

Visit us at [goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk](http://goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk) to sign up for our newsletter, learn more about our work, and find out how you can get involved. You can also follow us on Facebook at [fb.com/eaglesinsouthernskies](https://fb.com/eaglesinsouthernskies)

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