

The Applecross Trust



Fact Sheet 9

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

With a body length of 79-88cm, a wingspan of 190-227cm and a weight of 3-6kg the golden eagle is one of the most magnificent birds of prey in the UK, second only in size to the sea eagle.

Adult birds are a uniform brown colour with a paler brown head, while juvenile birds have a white patch on the base of the tail and on the underside of the wings. Other features include a square tail and fully feathered legs.

The golden eagle is known to range across Europe, Asia, North Africa and North America but in the UK they are found predominantly in the Scottish Highlands. They favour mountainous, often treeless habitats although they do require large trees or rock faces for nesting. It is not unusual to see eagles in the Applecross area, most commonly in the Applecross glen and above the Bealach.



Their favoured diet includes medium sized mammals such as rodents, hares and young deer, they also hunt birds, occasionally reptiles, and will also feed on carrion such as dead lambs or deer. These resident birds known for their graceful, soaring flight can remain in the air for hours at a time. They have exceptionally good eyesight and once prey has been spotted they dive down to seize and kill the prey with their curved talons.

Golden eagles mate for life and can have territories of up to 56 square km, the same nest is often used year after year, and often 2 eggs are laid. If food is not plentiful it is quite common for the older chick to kill the younger one.

There are believed to be approximately 440 pairs in Scotland, with the main threats still being from shooting, poisoning and pesticides in the food chain.

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