

GOLDENEAGLE

aquilachrysaetos

The Golden Eagle (its name is due to the golden crown and neck feathers) is Britain's only true or "booted" eagle and with a wingspan which in excess of 2m and weighing up to 6.7kg it is our second largest bird of prey after the White-Tailed Sea Eagle.

It is largely confined to the mountain regions of Scotland where it uses strong winds and updrafts to soar effortlessly in search of its food which consists mainly of carrion, rabbits and hares. The population remains fairly stable - in 2003 a comprehensive survey found 431 pairs.

Apart from persecution and disturbance, the main threats still facing the Golden Eagle result from the increasing use of land for conifer forestry which reduces the availability of prey, and improved methods of sheep husbandry which has resulted in a significant reduction in carrion. The latter has greatest effect during the lean winter months when sheep are driven to more sheltered lowland pasture.



Majestic!

FactFile

Length: 75cm – 88cm

Wingspan: 204cm – 220cm

Weight: 2.80kg – 6.70kg

Habitat: Open mountainous land. Nests are huge structures of twigs and small branches on rocky ledges. Normal clutch size is 2 eggs but frequently the larger chick kills the smaller one in the first week. Incubation takes 6 weeks, fledging 11 weeks and independence a further 14. A total of 31 weeks of parental care.