

# Sea eagles reintroduced to Scotland

Nineteen white-tailed sea eagles, gifted to Scotland as part of a reintroduction programme, have been released into the wild from a secret location in Fife.

The magnificent birds of prey, the UK's largest, arrived from Norway in June for the fourth year of the East Scotland Sea Eagle reintroduction project, a partnership scheme between RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland.

Since their arrival, the birds have been reared in specially built aviaries until they were old enough to fledge. They will now join Scotland's growing white-tailed eagle population and help restore this species to parts of their former range in the east of Scotland. This project is also contributing to wider conservation efforts across Europe for sea eagles.

The 'flying barn door', once a regular sight in Scotland's skies, was driven to extinction by game preservers and collectors in the Victorian era, with the last individual bird killed in 1916. It only returned to the UK following a successful reintroduction to the West of Scotland, on the Island of Rum in 1975.

Claire Smith, RSPB Scotland East Coast Sea Eagle Project Officer, said: "A diet of pike, haddock and roe deer has helped make sure these birds are fit and ready for life in the wild. Each bird has been fitted with a radio and wing tags so both project staff and the public can follow their progress. Already we receive many calls from the public thrilled to have seen a sea eagle on the east coast. For 2010 we've chosen yellow wing tags with black letters and numbers, and as usual any sightings can be reported to us via email on

eastscotlandseaeagles@rspb.org.uk. Since the start of the east coast project in 2007, the survival of the released birds has been good. We now expect that in the next few years some of our older birds will begin to set up territory on the east coast of Scotland and, one day produce chicks of their own."

Susan Davies, SNH's director of policy and advice, said: " In this International Year of Biodiversity it is particularly good to see the efforts to restore the sea eagle population across Scotland continue. These new recruits will help ensure that this impressive bird's future, as an important part of Scotland's biodiversity, is secured. As more people choose to stay at home for holidays, and as wildlife watching becomes ever more popular, our sea eagles help provide a local attraction that contributes to the local economy."

Charlie Taylor, Forestry Commission Scotland's district manager in Tayside added:"White-tailed eagles are magnificent birds and once seen they are never forgotten. The reintroduction programmes are very important and have been a success story so far. Hopefully, in time, everyone will be able to enjoy watching these birds on the east coast of Scotland."