

Eagle Couriers delivering birds of prey

Looking after their namesakes, Eagle Couriers have been transporting birds of prey which have perished back to the University of Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies from some remote locations.

They have done so at cost since they understand how important it is to understand any environmental factors which threaten the birds.

In a year [Eagle Couriers](#) have ferried 43 birds back to Edinburgh with eagles, falcons and sparrow hawks among the deliveries.



Gabriela Peniche, Conservation Biologist and PhD student working on raptor health at the Dick Vet, said: "My job is to assess these birds and use the results as an indication of environmental health.

"The samples we have worked on range from barn owls to golden

eagles. It is crucial that they are delivered as fresh as possible as we want to be able to assess the cause of death and whether lethal or ‘sub-lethal’ amounts of toxins play a part in this.

“We get samples from all over Scotland, including the Western Isles and Orkney. These sort of deliveries obviously pose issues, but Eagle Couriers has drivers all over the country.

“They have made things run so much smoother and have been very accommodating despite the variety and distance of pick-up locations.

“Their swift delivery has taken a lot of stress out of my work as I know I can rely on Eagle Couriers to pick up and deliver my samples quickly.

“The cherry on the cake really is the novelty of being able to say that my eagles are brought in by ‘Eagle Couriers’.”

Gabriela, who is originally from Mexico, has been studying raptor health in Edinburgh since November 2015. Along with her team, she deals with the majority of cases in Scotland, with around one in three samples being transported through Eagle Couriers.

Fiona Deas, Co-Director of Eagle Couriers, said: “Being able to help Gabriela and the team at the Dick Vet in Edinburgh has been a privilege.

“We are passionate about conservation and have an environmental certification, therefore we are willing to do anything we can to help.

“Since teaming up with them, we have transported 43 samples to Edinburgh from different regions of the country.

“We have such a broad reach with couriers all over Scotland, meaning getting samples to her when they become available is no issue. From eagles to owls, we have seen it all.”

However, not all samples are sent straight to Gabriela and her team. When raptor samples are discovered in suspicious circumstances they are handed over to the police or the RSPCA to conclude whether foul play has been involved in the animal's death.

If proven to not be suspicious, the samples are then passed on to the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in Edinburgh where Gabriela can check for signs of disease and toxins linked to their living environment.

Undertaken by Gabriela, under supervision from faculty members at The University of Edinburgh's Easter Bush Campus in Midlothian and Scottish Natural Heritage, the project on raptor health also runs in partnership with a wide range of organisations and institutions including the Environmental Research Institute, the Scottish Raptor Study Group, Scotland's Rural College, Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture and the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme.

It is hoped that the results gained from the project will provide an evidence base from which to improve the environment across the country.

If you find a dead bird of prey and there are no signs of wildlife crime, visit <https://www.ed.ac.uk/vet/raptor-health-scotland> for instructions of how to arrange collection.