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The return of White-tailed Sea Eagles to the east coast of Scotland

White tailed sea eagles (WTSE) are an iconic Scottish species that are being re-introduced to the east coast of Scotland by RSPB Scotland in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland. The project has been funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and LEADER as part of SEEVIEWS (Sea Eagle Education Viewing Interpretation and Engagement within Scotland).

Following a re-introduction programme in 1970s and 1990s a small population of 57 breeding pairs is now established on the west coast principally on Mull, Skye and Wester Ross. WTSE breed slowly, and the future of the Scottish population depends on creating new centres of population in favourable areas.

The re-introduction of WTSE began in 2007 in north Fife. The east coast was chosen for its rich coastal, estuary and wetland habitats. Since 2007 we have released 80 birds (all from Norwegian nests containing twins) and now in our final year of re-introduction we hope to release 6 more birds. We believe 86 birds are sufficient to establish a sustainable population.

WTSE mature at five to six years old, pair up for life and establish territories close to where they have hatched/been released. We plan to establish public viewing of a WTSE nest through either CCTV beamed into a local community/tourist hub and/or a public viewing hide.

Experience on Skye, and especially on Mull, has demonstrated that WTSEs act as a flagship for the natural heritage and wildlife tourism of these areas. Research has shown that of a total annual tourist spend of £100m on Mull, £5m was attracted by the presence of WTSE (Molloy 2011).

This project aims to:

- Establish a sustainable and secure WTSE population.
- Work with local businesses and tourism organizations to maximize the local economic benefits resulting from the presence of WTSEs
- Encourage a greater depth of local community involvement through volunteering opportunities.
- Create a sense of community pride and ownership through informing and engaging local people about the species and its rightful place in our ecosystem.
- Enthuse and teach young people about the importance of the natural habitats of the east coast of Scotland and the species that these habitats support.

Further Reading

Molloy, D, 2011. Wildlife at work. The economic impact of white-tailed eagles on the Isle of Mull. The RSPB, Sandy.



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Support Us

We rely on the public to submit sightings of WTSEs to support our work monitoring the success of this re-introduction project. Please make a note of the date, time location and what the bird was doing.

- Online: [sightings form](#)
- Email: eastscotlandsea eagles@rspb.org.uk
- Call us: 01738 696609
- Write to us: RSPB Scotland, Tayside and Fife Office, 1 Atholl Crescent, Perth PH15NG

This project and others like it would not have been possible without support from our RSPB members. If you would like to support us and do your bit for nature conservation in the UK and internationally, please visit the [RSPB website](#).

More information

If you would like to find out more about the re-introduction of WTSEs on the east coast of Scotland, please follow these links:

- [East Scotland Sea Eagles project page](#)
- [East Scotland Sea Eagle blog](#)
- [White tailed eagle species information](#)