

Please read the fact sheets about particular types of Falcon, Kite, Eagle and Hawk!

As tomorrow is a Bank Holiday there won't be any questions for you to answer on what you have read.

Instead, compare the different types of Bird of Prey. How do they differ? Compare features such as their size, weight and habitat.

Are there any distinctive characteristics that make your class name bird of prey the best of those you have read about?

Finally, think about the threats and dangers posed to these amazing birds.

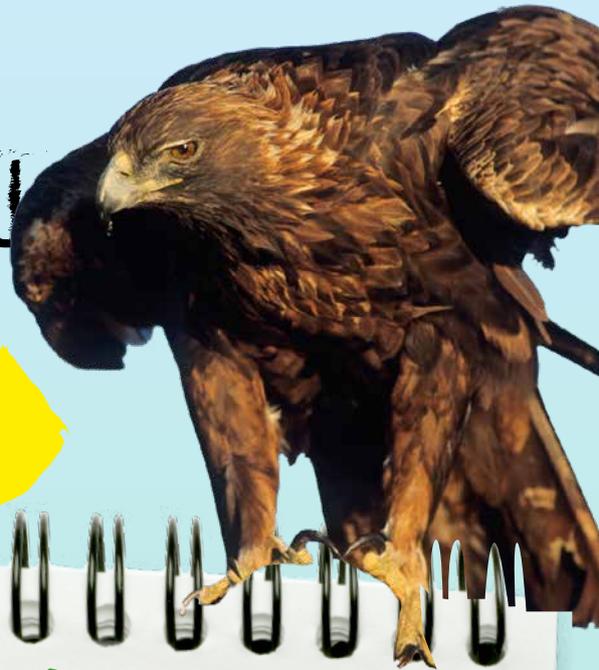
Have a fantastic long weekend!



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Name:

Golden eagle



History

Golden eagles used to be seen all over the UK and Europe, but in the 18th century, they were killed by farmers who mistakenly thought the birds were attacking their sheep.

Sadly, this persecution continued in the 19th century when some gamekeepers illegally killed the birds because they eat grouse, which people like to shoot for sport. This is why there are almost no golden eagles in England or Wales.

General info

Scientific name: *Aquila chrysaetos*

Size: Length up to 82cm; wingspan up to 2.1m – wider than the armspan of an adult human!

Weight: Males weigh an average of 3.7kg; females weigh an average of 5.3kg.

Where they live: Golden eagles live around mountains, moors and forests. In the UK, you can only see them in Scotland.

How long they live: Up to 23 years.

What they eat: Golden eagles will eat animals, such as deer and sheep, that have died of natural causes. They will also catch mammals and birds, including rabbits, grouse and wading birds. Despite what some people believe, golden eagles can't kill and carry off healthy lambs – hares are the biggest prey they can tackle.

Conservation status: The golden eagle is on the Green List, as it has recovered from previous declines.

What is special about this bird?

Golden eagles are very big and powerful, but also very graceful and have spectacular display flights. They soar up high and dive down at amazing speeds – it's an unforgettable sight.

Fascinating fact

Golden eagles are very popular across the world. They appear on more than 10 different countries' coats of arms, including Egypt, Ghana and Mexico.



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Name:

Peregrine



History

The relationship between peregrines and humans goes back thousands of years. Because of their speed and the fact they are easy to tame, people used them for falconry to catch food.

Despite this, they also killed wild peregrines and by the 1930s, there were only about 700 pairs left in the UK. More were killed during World War II, to stop them hunting the homing pigeons that carried important messages.

The number of peregrines hit an all-time low of only 360 pairs in the 1960s because of pesticides used in farming, which got into their bodies when they ate poisoned prey. This caused peregrines to lay eggs with very thin and fragile shells that broke far too early. Once these chemicals were banned and better laws were brought in to protect peregrines from illegal capture and egg collecting their numbers began to increase.

What is special about this bird?

Peregrines are the fastest birds on the planet and can dive (stoop) at speeds of over 100 miles per hour (mph). The fastest stoop ever recorded (of a captive bird) was 240mph.

General info

Scientific name: *Falco peregrinus*

Size: An average of 42cm in length, with a wingspan of 1m (the average armspan of a 9-year-old child is 1.3m).

Weight: Females weigh up to 1.1kg; but males only weigh about 670g.

Where they live: Most peregrines used to live on the rocky western coasts and in northern areas of the UK, but they now also nest on tall buildings in many UK cities and in other man-made sites, like quarries.

How long they live: Typically, peregrines live up to six years. The oldest recorded bird was still going strong at the age of 21 years and 10 months.

What they eat: A variety of birds – mostly feral pigeons, starlings and ducks.

Conservation status: The number of peregrines is increasing, so they are on our Green List.

Fascinating fact

Peregrines don't build nests. They usually find a shallow dip in rocks or scrape out a little dip in soil on a ledge of a cliff. Sometimes they nest on the ledges of buildings.



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Name:

Red kite



History

People valued kites in the Middle Ages because their scavenging kept the streets clean, but in the 16th century new laws branded them "vermin" and encouraged people to kill them. By the time birds of prey were given legal protection in 1954, only a few kites remained, in a small area of Wales.

In 1989, kites were reintroduced from Spain and Sweden to the Chilterns and the Black Isle in Easter Ross. As numbers increased, birds were carefully collected from the Chilterns and released into Yorkshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Northamptonshire and the Derwent Valley near Gateshead. Since then, kites have been reintroduced to Northern Ireland and East Scotland. These reintroductions were so successful that red kites are no longer of conservation concern.

What is special about this bird?

Red kites have long, forked tails that they use like a rudder to steer effortlessly through the air.

General info

Scientific name: *Milvus milvus*

Size: Up to 66cm long, with a wingspan of up to 1.95m (the average armspan of a 9-year-old child is 1.3m).

Weight: Males weigh an average of 1kg, while females are larger at about 1.2kg.

Where they live: Mainly Wales, southern England, East Midlands, Yorkshire, Gateshead area, Northern Ireland, northern and central Scotland, and Dumfries and Galloway. Young birds roam all over the UK for their first two years.

How long they live: On average they live for four years but the oldest recorded wild bird lived for 25 years, eight months and 28 days.

What they eat: Mainly carrion (dead creatures) and sometimes earthworms. Occasionally, they catch birds as big as gulls or crows.

Conservation status: Reintroduction schemes and the ongoing protection of red kites against illegal killing has allowed their numbers to rise rapidly. They are now on our Green List, which means we have no concerns about them.

Fascinating fact

Red kites collect shiny, bright and eye-catching objects to line their nests. Flags, socks and even a pair of frilly knickers have been found in nests!



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Name:

Sparrowhawk



History

In the past, sparrowhawk numbers suffered because their woodland homes were cut down and some people killed them.

Pesticides, which were used in farming, also entered the sparrowhawk's food chain through the prey they caught, causing their eggs to have very thin and fragile shells that broke far too early. Fortunately, these chemicals were eventually banned and sparrowhawks are now protected, so their population has recovered.

General info

Scientific name: *Accipiter nisus*

Size: Up to 33cm long with a wingspan of up to 62cm (the average armspan of a 9-year-old child is 1.3 m).

Weight: Males can weigh up to 180g; females are much heavier at up to 345g.

Where they live: The whole of the UK apart from the most northerly Scottish Highlands and islands. If you watch carefully, you might see sparrowhawks in your garden or school grounds.

How long they live: The average lifespan for a sparrowhawk is four years, but the oldest known wild sparrowhawk lived for 17 years.

What they eat: Mainly small birds and pigeons. Sparrowhawks ambush their prey from hiding and have learned that gardens are great places to find lunch.

Conservation status: Because there are currently no concerns about sparrowhawks, they are on our Green List.

What is special about this bird?

Sparrowhawks are one of the most nimble birds of prey and can twist and turn to dodge trees as they chase their prey through woodland, reaching speeds of up to 50km per hour.

Fascinating fact

Female sparrowhawks are up to 25% bigger than males, which means they can tackle larger prey, while males are more agile and better at hunting smaller birds. This means that males and females don't compete for food.