

Returning lost eagle species to Wales

February 18 2019

Research taking place in Wales could see the return of lost eagle species to our countryside, bringing both conservation and economic benefits.

As part of pan-European efforts to restore eagles across their historic breeding range, researchers at Cardiff University are investigating whether the modern Welsh landscape has the potential to support their reintroduction.

Once a common sight in our skies, both the Golden and White-tailed eagle were driven to extinction in Wales in the mid-1800s. Today, the total European population of both eagle species is relatively small, and numbers are in further decline in many countries, primarily due to human persecution and [habitat loss](#).

Bringing eagles back to Wales will help to strengthen ongoing efforts to conserve this endangered species. But, while the reintroduction of eagles to Wales is not a new concept, until now there has not been a rigorous assessment of whether it may be possible.

Eagle Reintroduction Wales Project researcher, Sophie-lee Williams from Cardiff University, explained: "Wales is home to large expanses of potentially suitable eagle habitat, but, before we begin reintroducing the species, there are many questions we need to answer about the quality of habitat, and whether it can sustain eagles.

"Working closely with partners such as the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation and Wildlife Trust Wales, we are currently carrying out a

full feasibility study which will enable us to answer some of these questions and determine whether the Welsh countryside is a suitable location for eagle reintroduction."

Reintroducing eagles to the Welsh countryside would be an achievement of international conservation importance and, as seen with similar projects elsewhere in the UK and Ireland, it could also bring significant benefits to [local communities](#) and regional economies through wildlife tourism.

The reintroduction programme of White-tailed Eagles on the west coast of Scotland attracts an extra 1.4 million visitors to the region every year, generating up to £5 million of tourist spend on the Isle of Mull, and supporting 110 jobs.

Rewilding projects are often not without controversy, but the project team are keen to allay any concerns about the potential return of eagles to the country.

"The project is in the very early stages of development, and a reintroduction is not likely to happen for some time", commented Sophie-lee.

"If our [landscape research](#) is positive, there will be a significant and strictly regulated licensing and consultation process before eagles are reintroduced, which would enable residents to have their concerns heard and addressed.

"However, if successful, the project could bring far-reaching benefits, helping to restore Wales' diminished biodiversity, regenerating local economies, and aiding the conservation status of both the Golden and White-tailed [eagle](#) at a national and international level."

Provided by Cardiff University

Citation: Returning lost eagle species to Wales (2019, February 18) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-lost-eagle-species-wales.html>

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