



The Golden Eagle – a profile

Scientific name: *Aquila chrysaetos*

Wingspan: f 220-230 cm, m ~200 cm

Weight: f ca. 5 kg, m ca. 3,7 kg



Distinguishing features: long, relatively slim wings, outspread and flat during flight, with a conspicuous narrowing at the wing base. Tail of medium length, projecting head. Adult Golden Eagles are overall dark brown in colour, with a golden yellow tinge on the back of the neck and the top of the head. Young birds with numerous white patches of plumage. Primaries widely splayed while gliding.

Habitat: Open or partly open landscapes. From the higher areas of the European and Asian mountains to the tundra landscapes of northern Asia to steppelands and to the almost desert like landscapes of California, Mexiko and North Africa.

Distribution: Occurs throughout the Northern Hemisphere.

Age: The oldest known Golden Eagle from the wild was 32 years old. However, it is possible that the birds regularly attain ages of over 35 years, and in captivity of up to 50 years.

Call: "kleeyak" or "hee-ay" – loud, barking call.

Food: Dependent upon the region. Medium sized mammals and birds; in the Alps primarily marmots, fox, mountain hare, black grouse and ptarmigan, and in winter mainly carion of game animals (most commonly chamois).

Social behaviour: Remain social throughout the year, territorial, pair for life.

Breeding biology: 1-2 eggs laid at the end of March/beginning of April, first young hatches after about 45 days. Usually only a single chick survives. Capable of flight after about 80 days, usually mid-July to early August.

Numbers occurring in the Alps: about. 1 300 pairs, of which in D ~ 60 breeding pairs, A ~ 350, F ~ 250, I ~ 300 – 400, CH ~ 300, FL ~1, SLO ~0

Threats: The Golden Eagle is a potentially threatened species and is thus listed in Appendix 1 of the EU Birds Directive. Disturbances to the nest and within the hunting territory from helicopters, aerial sports, climbers and mountain walkers all create a potential problem. The shooting of Golden Eagles is prohibited and illegal throughout the Alps.

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