



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01500**

### **Name of petitioner**

Stuart Housden OBE on behalf of RSPB Scotland

### **Petition title**

Golden Eagle as the National Bird of Scotland

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to formally declare the Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*, as the national bird of Scotland. This could be done either through legislation, or through a parliamentary motion.

### **Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

A previous petition (PE783) was submitted on the same subject in 2004 by Mr James Reynolds after a poll in the Scotsman newspaper voted the Golden Eagle the country's most loved bird.

The petition was referred to the Enterprise and Culture Committee, which was unable to identify a formal process to create national symbols for Scotland. No further action was taken or a conclusion reached prior to the 2007 election.

The golden Eagle has been included in Scottish Natural Heritage's Big 5 for the Year of Natural Scotland, demonstrating the cultural importance of this well-loved species. This will also provide some measure of public support.

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/enjoying-the-outdoors/year-of-natural-scotland-2013/scotlands-big-5-celebrations/>

RSPB has been participating in Scottish Environment LINK's Species Champions programme with Rhoda Grant being the Species Champion for the Golden Eagle.

### **Petition background information**

The majestic Golden Eagle is clearly identifiable with the glens, moors and mountains of Scotland, and is thoroughly, inextricably entwined with our history and culture.

For centuries, eagles have been included on our company logos and clan badges. They feature in place names, poetry and on ancient burial sites. Soaring majestically above the treetops, they capture the spirit of Scotland.

However, they could and should be more common. Scots and visitors to Scotland should not hope that an eagle sighting is a once in a lifetime experience; they should expect to see them regularly. We need to strengthen our efforts to protect these birds in line with the Golden Eagle framework published in 2008 by SNH.

2013 is the Year of Natural Scotland, a year where the Scottish Government is celebrating our natural heritage. This should leave a meaningful legacy for our wildlife, and what better legacy than to formally designate the eagle as a symbol of our nation. This would recognise the place eagles have in our cultures how our commitment to further conserving these beautiful creatures for generations to come and help restore their population to the natural level commensurate with the habitat they inhabit.

In 2004, RSPB Scotland supported a previous bid to declare the Golden Eagle the national bird of Scotland. During that attempt, the Enterprise and Culture Committee concluded that it could take no action because there was not a formal process for creating such a symbol. Currently there is also a petition for the designation of a national tree (PE01457).

The response to the petitioner has been that the Scottish Government should take action this year, given that it has the powers to do so.

From researching the process of designation of cultural symbols in other nations and states, we suggest the following courses of action the Scottish Government could take on this matter.

Firstly, the National bird of Scotland could be created via a short bill. This action was taken by the United States when they declared the Oak tree to be the American National Tree in 2007. Additionally, many states have designated symbols in this way, such as the state of Texas, which chose the Northern Mocking bird as its state bird in 1927.

Secondly, there could be a motion laid in parliament declaring the Golden Eagle to be the national bird. If supported by a majority of MSPs this could act as a clear declaration.

#### Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/goldeneagle>

#### Related information for petition

#### Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

#### How many signatures have you collected so far?

0

#### Closing date for collecting signatures online

06 / 12 / 2013

#### Comments to stimulate online discussion

It's hailed as an icon of wild Scotland, used on company logos, place names and ancient burial sites, and now a new campaign is aiming to see the golden eagle named as the country's national bird.

There are currently just 431 pairs of Golden Eagles in the whole of Scotland. Owing to

centuries of persecution, this most charismatic of birds has been almost entirely confined to the more remote areas of the country, such as the mountains and glens of the west coast and on the western isles, with numbers held at artificially low levels and many territories vacant.

RSPB Scotland, backed by wildlife cameraman Gordon Buchanan, has submitted a petition urging ministers to formally designate the species as a national symbol, placing it alongside the lion rampant, saltire and Scottish thistle and emblems of the country.