



Alpine Eagle Foundation

A year after announcing its support for the reintroduction of the white-tailed eagle in the Lake Geneva region, the Foundation is adding a new scientific mission to its commitment to preserving the golden eagle

Geneva, October 5th, 2023 – Created with the aim of raising awareness, mobilising support and taking action on behalf of the entire Alpine massif and the life it shelters, the Alpine Eagle Foundation today announces its participation in a new protection programme. The objective of this project undertaken in collaboration with the University of Bern is to predict the potential impact of the future installation of wind turbines in the Swiss Alps on the golden eagle population, in order to avoid siting them in areas where there is a high risk of collision with the blades. This undertaking is in addition to the ongoing project supporting the *Aigles du Léman* wildlife park in reintroducing the white-tailed eagle to the Lake Geneva region.

The eagle has been chosen by the Foundation to symbolise influential action on behalf of the entire ecosystem. Majestic yet threatened, it is the emblem of an approach that targets the entire surrounding Alpine environment. With its outstretched wings, it appears to embrace the landscape over which it soars, and that the Foundation bearing its name intends to protect. In calling for its conservation, the Foundation aims to raise collective awareness.



An ambitious project to reintroduce the white-tailed eagle

Since 2022, one of the Foundation's current projects has focused on the reintroduction of the white-tailed eagle around Lake Geneva. Switzerland's most densely populated region, the plains of the Lemanic Basin have long been the natural habitat of this species, nicknamed the "fish eagle" due to the main component of its diet. Agile, fast and powerful, the largest eagle in Western Europe and probably the inspiration for the Canton of Geneva's coat-of-arms had nonetheless vanished from the region for 130 years. Thanks to grant from the Alpine Eagle Foundation, the *Aigles du Léman* wildlife park, created in Sciez (Haute-Savoie, France) by Jacques-Olivier Travers, is working to reintroduce new specimens to the area.

The raptor's role in regulating local fauna is crucial. As Jacques-Olivier Travers explains: *"It is what we call a 'top predator', in other words, an animal that will regulate the other species below it, by hunting or preying on them. That is the point of bringing back a species that was present in the past and that will bring something to the biotope of today."*

In June 2022, the first eaglet in a litter of four was successfully released after spending 81 days in its parents' nest. The first signs of adaptation to the wild were positive, thanks to a GPS beacon fitted to the animal and enabling daily tracking of precise data such as its location, heart rate and diet.

Following this first action, four birds of prey followed, offering the opportunity to observe a diversity of behaviour once the subjects had been left to their own devices. One of them was shot and mutilated by a German hunter, underlining the need for the Foundation to raise public awareness of the threat to the species. *"This is the kind of practice that caused the disappearance of Western Europe's largest eagle from the shores of Lake Geneva 130 years ago"*, said Jacques-Olivier Travers.



Reintroduction efforts are continuing and around 80 white-tailed eagles will gradually be released on the shores of Lake Geneva up till 2030.

A new programme to protect the golden eagle in the Swiss Alps

Today, the members of the Foundation are announcing the launch of a new programme in partnership with Professor Raphaël Arlettaz, Head of the Division of Conservation Biology at the University of Bern. The gradual installation of wind turbines at ever-higher altitudes will increase the likelihood of these large birds of prey colliding with the blades. The programme will attempt to use a spatial model to define the areas at risk in the Swiss Alps, to ensure that the areas most critical to the eagle's survival are spared. Similar work has already been carried out on the bearded vulture. This data will also be useful for the protection of the eagles reintroduced on the Lake Geneva coastline, as they will also fly towards the Alps.

The aim of this scientific mission is to collect and analyse GPS data obtained from eagles equipped with beacons, in order to create tools for understanding and improvement that will enable the decision-makers concerned to move towards more sustainable energy production and development in Alpine regions that respects biodiversity.

The project comprises three elements. Firstly the scientific team will monitor a population of around 15 golden eagles in order to model their flight altitude. Secondly, it will analyse the influence that topographical and meteorological conditions and the availability of food resources have on the flight behaviour of golden eagles. Finally, the study plans to examine the ability of eagles and bearded vultures fitted with GPS tags to memorise potentially lethal obstacles in their territory such as wind turbines, and to modify their behaviour accordingly.



Partially funded by the Alpine Eagle Foundation, this innovative programme will run for four years.

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The Alps are the largest ecosystem on the European continent. Located in several developed and interconnected nations, this living mineral massif is subject to countless pressures.

The Alpine Eagle Foundation's motto is "Preserving the Alps", an explicit, broad and philanthropic goal. It was founded in 2020 by Karl-Friedrich Scheufele (Chopard Co-President) along with several specialists and lovers of the Alps, such as falconer Jacques-Olivier Travers (creator of the *Aigles du Léman* park) and Ronald Menzel (Managing Director of the Freedom Conservation campaigning to protect birds of prey). Its projects aim to raise awareness, mobilise support and take action on behalf of the entire Alpine region and the life it shelters.

Since 2022, Chopard has been contributing directly to the funding of the Foundation's programmes through a 41 mm-diameter Alpine Eagle timepiece in Lucent Steel™ or Ethical 18-carat rose gold, adorned with a Pine Green dial. A portion of the profits from sales of these creations is donated to the Alpine Eagle Foundation.