

YZC Animal of the Month, April 2012

White-tailed Sea Eagle

Haliaeetus albicilla



Explore the British Birds display in the lower gallery and you can find this mighty bird gazing down at you. The White-tailed Sea Eagle, sometimes known as the White-tailed Fish Eagle, is the largest bird of prey to be found around the British Isles. Its wings can span a whopping two and a half metres! To give you an idea of how big that is, the blackbird in your back garden has a wingspan of about 35cm. So you would need about 7 blackbirds next to one another to get the wingspan of a sea eagle. So sea eagle wings are pretty

substantial. The feathers at the tips look like spread-out fingers with slots between them. These are perfect for soaring over cliffs and mountains.

White-tailed Sea Eagles eat a variety of different foods. They swoop down over oceans and lakes to snatch fish from the surface waters in their talons. They also eat birds, and carrion is an important part of their diet in the winter.

It has not always been possible to see White-tailed Sea Eagles in Britain. People have hunted them in the past, causing them to disappear from the British Isles by the early 1900s. However, since 1975 there has been a programme of reintroducing these magnificent birds to Scotland, and now there are breeding pairs found off the northwest coast and the Western Isles such as Rum, Mull and Skye. Just imagine seeing such an incredible animal high in the sky above you!