



**WHERE EAGLES SOAR...**

**KEEPING BIRDS OF PREY SAFE AND WELL DURING  
LOCKDOWN AT WARWICK CASTLE**

*16 April 2020:* The UK may be on lockdown but for the falconers at Warwick Castle, life goes on with continued duties of dedicated care for over seventy birds of prey.



**Watch video:**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/14sSHPsPbWbB3zWrauoNygoZHuTCRljC7/view>

**High res videos & images:**

[https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1VSqqhB1MLP\\_j2z8302zFm5AfGWIAZU6Z](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1VSqqhB1MLP_j2z8302zFm5AfGWIAZU6Z)

It's a busy time for the falconers, with daily activities including exercise, flying and feeding for over 10 different bird species, despite the castle being closed during the lockdown period.

Head Falconer Chris O'Donnell lives on site and works alongside two others to take care of the birds.

"The castle may be closed for now but our work continues," explains Chris. "We have around 70 eagles and vultures, ranging from Andean condors - the largest flying bird in the world - to peregrine falcons, bearded vultures and a Steller's sea eagle. They all still need exercise and flying."

The birds would usually be featured as part of the attraction's latest show, *The Falconer's Quest*, the largest bird of prey show in the UK.

"We are still flying birds every day," explains Chris. "Nobody's here to see it in person, but life goes on and it's important that we keep the birds fit and active."

To support families at home during lockdown, Warwick Castle recently developed a range of free resources accessible online including activities, videos and downloadables, all themed around castles, history and of course, the birds of prey.

The new History Unlocked section can be found at [www.warwick-castle.com/history-unlocked](http://www.warwick-castle.com/history-unlocked) and is all available for free.

### **The many personalities of Birds of Prey at Warwick Castle**

**Rosie, Andean Condor** – weighing up to 15 kilograms with a wing span of 3.2m, the Andean Condor is the largest flying bird in the world when measuring a combination of weight and wingspan. A true marvel to watch, this bird is a national symbol of Argentina, Chile and four other countries, plus has long played a role in mythology amongst Andean cultures. Due to its size and mischievous nature, it is tipped to be one of the heroes of *The Falconer's Quest* at Warwick Castle.

**Barty, Bearded Vulture** – intelligent birds renowned in the wild for their ability to smash bones into smaller, bite-size pieces, the Bearded Vulture has a wing span of 2.75m. With a diet consisting almost exclusively of bone, the Bearded Vulture is unique in the vulture world in not having a bald head; its head and breast feathers often appear an eye-catching rust colour caused from dust-bathing or rubbing mud on its body.

**Marvin, Steller's Sea Eagle** – the largest eagle in the world with a wing span of 2.5m and a weight of around 9.5 kilograms, the dark brown and black plumage contrasts

beautifully with areas of white on the body and the strong yellow colour on the bill and feet.

**Poppy, Peregrine Falcon** – the fastest animal on earth, with the ability to dive for prey at speeds of over 200mph compared to a cheetah’s run of up to 70 mph, Peregrine Falcons are respected falconry birds thanks to their strong hunting ability and capacity for being trained. It is the world’s most widespread raptor and can be found in urban and rural areas almost anywhere on Earth except extreme polar regions and New Zealand.

- ENDS -

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### **Warwick Castle**

Warwick Castle is currently closed to visitors. Full details can be found at: <https://www.warwick-castle.com/about/coronavirus/>

Warwick Castle is easily accessible from Junction 15 of the M40, just 40 minutes from Birmingham and 1 hour 40 minutes from London. Warwick Castle is easy to reach by train from London Marylebone in only 86 minutes. The Castle, set in 64 acres of grounds designed by Capability Brown, rests on the banks of the River Avon at the heart of historic Warwick.

### **About Merlin Entertainments plc**

Merlin Entertainments plc is a global leader in location-based, family entertainment. As Europe's Number 1 and the world's second-largest visitor attraction operator, Merlin now operates over 130 attractions, 19 hotels and 6 holiday villages in 25 countries and across 4 continents. Merlin’s purpose is to deliver memorable experiences to its 67 million guests around the world, through its iconic brands and multiple attraction formats, and the commitment and passion of its c.28,000 employees (peak season).

See [www.merlinentertainments.biz](http://www.merlinentertainments.biz) for more information and follow on Twitter @MerlinEntsNews.

**#MakingMagicwithMerlin** is an exciting range of content brought to you by the global company Merlin Entertainments.

**Making Magic with Merlin** has been created for families to watch and learn some fantastic facts about some of the world's best known attractions! We hope you enjoy watching our short series of films – new ones are being uploaded every day to YouTube – which will inform in a fun way. We call it creative learning and we hope you spread the word!