



AN ENDANGERED Japanese golden eagle in Nagano Prefecture is captured on film by a member of a bird-watching group. KYODO PHOTO

Eagle protection scheme planned by government

The Environment Agency will launch a program to protect the endangered Japanese golden eagle, including a foster-parent scheme, agency officials said Monday.

Under the plan, an attempt will be made to take eaglets from areas inhabited by a relatively large number of golden eagles and have them brought up by a pair of golden eagles in Oita Prefecture, the only remaining birds of the species in Kyushu.

Eagles usually lay two eggs, and the first born often kills the second. The foster-parent plan is designed to save the second-born eaglets.

The female of the Oita pair has laid eggs five times in the past 10 years, but no eaglets have been born.

There are only about 120 pairs of the predatory birds

currently living in Japan in about 20 prefectures, and the number of eaglets born every year is dwindling rapidly, according to a group of naturalists who study the birds.

Despite being legally protected, the species has become seriously endangered because of rampant resort development and shrinking broadleaf forests that are the habitats for eagles' prey, such as snakes and hares.

The agency also plans to improve the conditions cliffs where they build nests. Many such cliffs have been destroyed by development and deforestation.

The agency will set up a study committee of experts next year to fashion measures to protect the birds, which are designated as a natural treasure of the nation.