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## ABSTRACT

### **Eagle Owls in Great Britain: an assessment of potential impacts**

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The Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* was first documented breeding in Great Britain in 1984 and has been reported breeding annually since 1997. Widespread and ecologically adaptable elsewhere within its European range, the Eurasian Eagle Owl has been identified as a species with the potential to become more widely established within Britain. As a consequence, the Great Britain Non Native Species Secretariat recently commissioned a risk assessment to (a) establish the likelihood of the species becoming more widely established and (b) identify possible impacts on other species (see also Toms 2009 for a summary).

The degree to which the breeding population expands over the coming years will be determined by a number of factors, including both the further escape of birds from captivity and the addition of recruits from breeding attempts in the wild. Dispersal of young birds may help to expand the small breeding population into new areas - for example, the two British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) ringed Eurasian Eagle Owl chicks to have been recovered (out of 29 ringed) were found 160 km and 218 km from the nest site, distances similar to those demonstrated in Switzerland through satellite-tracking.

Based on what is known of Eurasian Eagle Owl diet and behaviour elsewhere in Europe, the risk assessment work identified a number of bird and mammal species that might suffer as a result of a growing population of Eagle Owls. Among these are Pine Marten *Martes martes*, Capercaillie *Tetra urogallus* and Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, the latter being one among a number of native raptor species that Eurasian Eagle Owls will not tolerate within their breeding territory.

The risk assessment can be used as a tool to target or improve appropriate monitoring schemes (both for captive and 'wild' birds) and to alert conservation practitioners and policymakers to the potential impacts of a growing population of Eurasian Eagle Owls within Great Britain.

#### **Reference**

Toms, M.P. 2009. Eagle Owls in Britain: origins and conservation implications. *Br. Wildl.* 20: 405-412.