

Tetrao urogallus -- Linnaeus, 1758

ANIMALIA -- CHORDATA -- AVES -- GALLIFORMES -- PHASIANIDAE

Common names: Western Capercaillie; Capercaillie

European Red List Assessment

European Red List Status

LC -- Least Concern, (IUCN version 3.1)

Assessment Information

Year published:	2015
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Assessor(s):	BirdLife International
Reviewer(s):	Symes, A.
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Assessment Rationale

European regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)

EU27 regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)

At both European and EU27 scales this species has an extremely large range, and hence does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the range size criterion (Extent of Occurrence 10% in ten years or three generations, or with a specified population structure). The population trend appears to be increasing, and hence the species does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the population trend criterion (30% decline over ten years or three generations).

For these reasons the species is evaluated as Least Concern within both Europe and the EU27.

Occurrence

Countries/Territories of Occurrence

Native:

Albania; Andorra; Austria; Belarus; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Ireland, Rep. of; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Macedonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of; Montenegro; Norway; Poland; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Ukraine

Reintroduced:

United Kingdom

Vagrant:

Denmark

Population

The European population is estimated at 666,000-1,060,000 calling or lekking males, which equates to 1,330,000-2,110,000 mature individuals. The population in the EU27 is estimated at 554,000-818,000 calling or lekking males, which equates to 1,110,000-1,640,000 mature individuals. For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Trend

In Europe and the EU27 the population size is estimated to be increasing. For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Habitats and Ecology

The species inhabits forest and woodland, mainly coniferous or mixed coniferous deciduous (de Juana and Kirwan 2012). It prefers extensive areas of old, shady forest often with damp soil and interspersed with bogs, areas of peat or glades, and with a dense undergrowth of ericaceous plants (*Vaccinium*, *Calluna*) but with canopy neither too open or closed (Madge and McGowan 2002). It may use more open forest in winter and denser forest with abundant fruit bushes in summer. Males form ill-defined leks (de Juana and Kirwan 2012). It lays from mid-April to mid-June but with most laying in May. It lays six to nine eggs (Madge and

McGowan 2002). The nest is a shallow depression lined with plant material or feathers and it is found in thick cover often at the base of a tree (Harrison and Castell 2002). In northern parts of its range it feeds predominantly on pine needles during the winter. In southern parts of the range its winter diet is more varied. In summer its diet includes needles, leaves, stems and berries of a variety of plants. Insects are only important in the diet of small chicks. It is mainly sedentary with local movements in winter in response to feeding requirements (de Juana and Kirwan 2012).

Habitats & Altitude			
Habitat (level 1 - level 2)		Importance	Occurrence
Forest - Boreal		suitable	resident
Forest - Temperate		suitable	resident
Altitude	max. 2000 m	Occasional altitudinal limits	

Threats

The main threat to this species is destruction or alteration of its woodland habitat. It is still commonly heavily hunted (even during breeding season), except in SW and C Europe. Other factors possibly involved in declines include disturbance (e.g. development of ski facilities and other winter recreation activities), collisions (especially of juveniles) with high-tension powerlines and in some areas fences, predation (e.g. by foxes), pollution (acid rain) and climatic changes, (e.g. in Scotland) (de Juana and Kirwan 2012).

Threats & Impacts					
Threat (level 1)	Threat (level 2)	Impact and Stresses			
Agriculture & aquaculture	Agro-industry plantations	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Medium Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion; Ecosystem degradation			
Climate change & severe weather	Temperature extremes	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
		Stresses			
		Reduced reproductive success			
Human intrusions & disturbance	Recreational activities	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species disturbance			
Invasive and other problematic species, genes & diseases	Unspecified species	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Negligible declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			
Pollution	Acid rain	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Negligible declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Indirect ecosystem effects			
Residential & commercial development	Tourism & recreation areas	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion			
Transportation & service corridors	Utility & service lines	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			

Conservation

Conservation Actions Underway

In general the species is fully and effectively protected in western and central Europe. In countries such as Austria, Italy and France, hunting is allowed in certain areas and strictly regulated, however in eastern and

southern Europe illegal hunting may be having a serious impact on the population. A small proportion of the species range is covered by protected areas, however these are only important where populations are particularly threatened by habitat degradation and poaching. In central and western Europe, the Natura 2000 network cover large parts of the capercaillie's range. Surveys or monitoring occur regularly for planning harvests or in regions with small remnant populations. Habitat management is thought to be the most important conservation tool for this species and a good example is ongoing in Scotland within the EU life Programme. There have been many reintroduction attempt over the years, although most have failed (Storch 2007). In Scotland, it went extinct from 1785 but was successfully reintroduced in 1836–1837. However, countrywide numbers estimated at c. 1980 birds in winter 2003/04, and it is declining. Guidelines have been proposed in the U.K. for buffer zones around leks and breeding areas (de Juana and Kirwan 2013).

Conservation Actions Proposed

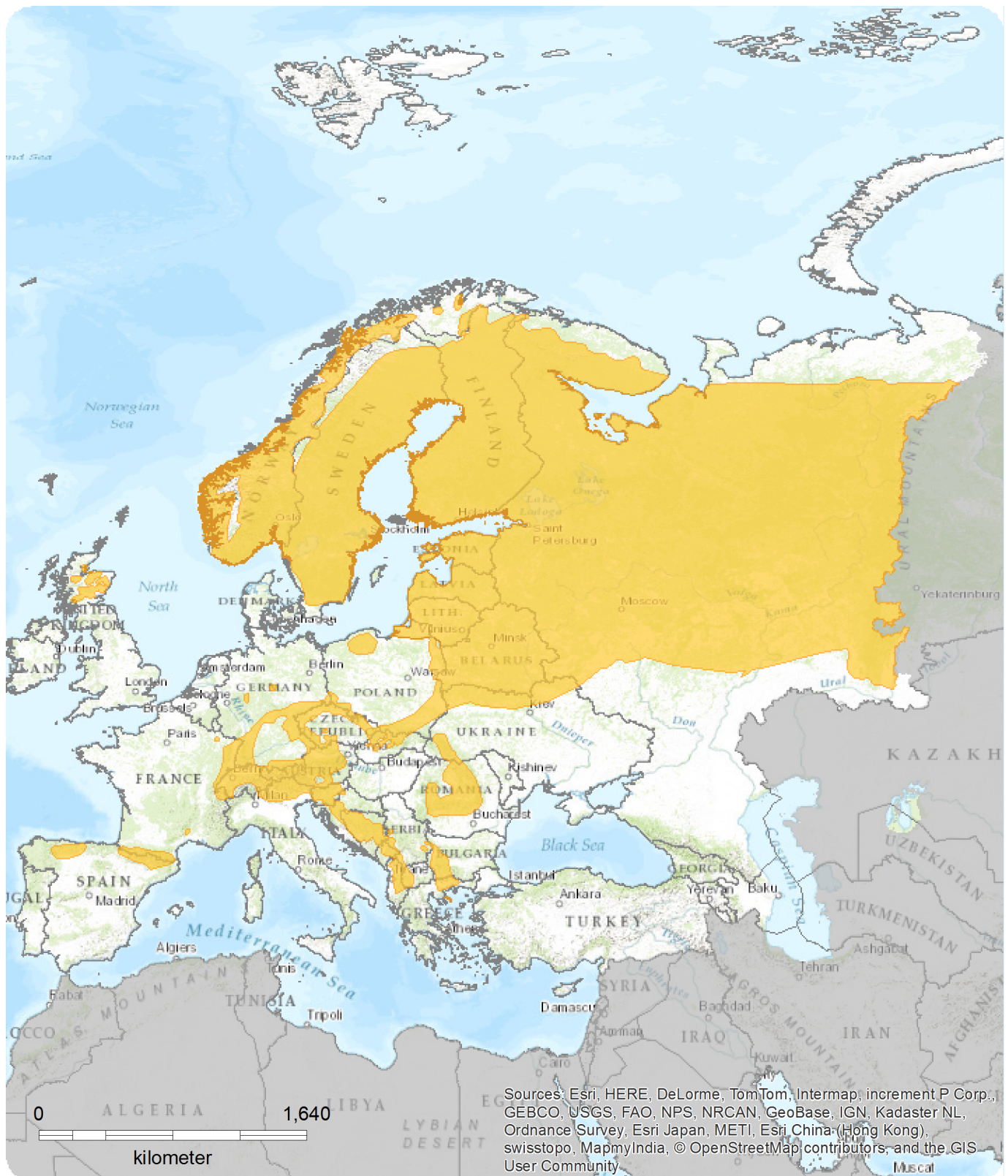
The integration of forestry practices and capercaillie conservation is needed to help maintain the large areas of open forest which it needs and maintain and restore spatial connection among populations. In addition, all development should be banned where populations are threatened. Human disturbance should be reduced, particularly in areas with small or threatened populations. The reduction of collision mortality could be achieved through the removal, relocation and visualization by marking of power lines, cables and deer and sheep fences. Better law enforcement is needed locally in areas where it is threatened by poaching. Monitoring programmes and research on larger-scale habitat relationships, predation patterns and population dynamics, minimum requirements in population size and in habitat area and connections should be undertaken (Storch 2007).

Bibliography

- de Juana, E. and Kirwan, G.M. 2012. Western Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal, J., Christie, D.A. and de Juana, E. (eds.) 2012. *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <http://www.hbw.com/node/53328> on 6 October 2014).
- Harrison, C.J.O. and Castell, P. 2002. *Bird Nests, Eggs and Nestlings of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*. Second revised edn. HarperCollins, London.
- Madge, S. and McGowan, P. 2002. *Pheasants, Partridges and Grouse, including Buttonquails, Sandgrouse and Allies*. Christopher Helm, London.
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Map (see overleaf)

European Regional Assessment



Tetrao urogallus

Range

■ Extant (resident)

Citation:
BirdLife International (2015)
European Red List of Birds



Map created 05/13/2015

