

Circus pygargus -- (Linnaeus, 1758)

ANIMALIA -- CHORDATA -- AVES -- ACCIPITRIFORMES -- ACCIPITRIDAE

Common names: Montagu's Harrier; Busard cendré

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
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Assessment Rationale

European regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)

EU27 regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)

In Europe 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 is not known, but the population is not believed to be decreasing sufficiently rapidly to approach the thresholds under the population trend criterion (30% decline over ten years or three generations). For these reasons the species is evaluated as Least Concern in Europe.

Within the EU27 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). Despite the fact that the population trend appears to be decreasing, the decline is not believed to be sufficiently rapid to 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 in the EU27.

Occurrence

Countries/Territories of Occurrence

Native:

Albania; Andorra; Armenia; Austria; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Belgium; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Macedonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of; Malta; Moldova; Montenegro; Netherlands; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Canary Is. (to ES); Sweden; Switzerland; Turkey; Ukraine; United Kingdom; Gibraltar (to UK)

Vagrant:

Iceland; Ireland, Rep. of; Norway

Population

The European population is estimated at 54,500-92,200 breeding females, which equates to 109,000-184,000 mature individuals. The population in the EU27 is estimated at 15,600-21,400 breeding females, which equates to 31,200-42,800 mature individuals. For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Trend

In Europe the population size trend is unknown. In the EU27 the population size is estimated to be decreasing by less than 25% in 23.7 years (three generations). For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Habitats and Ecology

This is a migratory species, wintering in sub-Saharan Africa (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001, Orta *et al.* 2014). It leaves its breeding grounds in August and September, beginning their return in March and April (Snow and Perrins 1998, Orta *et al.* 2014). Birds tend to migrate on broad fronts, but there are concentrations

in Gibraltar and along the Rift Valley (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001, Orta *et al.* 2014). Nevertheless it will readily migrate over expanses of water (Brown *et al.* 1982). Birds tend to hunt alone, although they do gather at high prey concentrations and will roost in groups of often over 50, sometimes communally with *C. macrourus* and *C. aeruginosus* (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001). It is a bird of open country, usually in lowlands. Small birds and mammals form the majority of its diet; voles are a particularly dominant food source locally in abundant areas. It nests in tall vegetation on the ground. The nest is a small, narrow platform, 20–40 cm wide, made of grass stems or thin twigs. Clutches are normally three to five eggs (Orta *et al.* 2014).

Habitats & Altitude			
Habitat (level 1 - level 2)		Importance	Occurrence
Artificial/Terrestrial - Arable Land		suitable	breeding
Artificial/Terrestrial - Plantations		suitable	breeding
Grassland - Temperate		suitable	breeding
Shrubland - Temperate		suitable	breeding
Wetlands (inland) - Bogs, Marshes, Swamps, Fens, Peatlands		suitable	breeding
Altitude	0-4000 m	Occasional altitudinal limits	

Threats

In the past, the use of organochlorine pesticides seemed to cause a decline in Europe (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001). It is currently in decline owing to the conversion of its habitat to agricultural land, an environment in which crop gathering by combine harvesters causes frequent breeding failure in the species (Orta *et al.* 2014). Intensification on this land increases this threat (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001). It is commensal with some forms of agriculture, and changes in these practices could leave it potentially vulnerable by depleting its supply of small birds and mammals to prey on (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001, Orta *et al.* 2014). It is highly vulnerable to the impacts of potential wind energy developments (Strix 2012).

Threats & Impacts					
Threat (level 1)	Threat (level 2)	Impact and Stresses			
Agriculture & aquaculture	Agro-industry farming	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Medium Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion			
Agriculture & aquaculture	Shifting agriculture	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Medium Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion			
Energy production & mining	Renewable energy	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			
Pollution	Herbicides and pesticides	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Past, Likely to Return	Majority (50-90%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Past Impact
		Stresses			
		Indirect ecosystem effects			

Conservation

Conservation Actions Underway

Bern Convention Appendix II. EU Birds Directive Annex I. CITES Appendix II. CMS Appendix II. Successful conservation programmes in Bavaria resulted in the population there growing from only a few pairs in the 1990s to 153 in 2008. Across Europe, particularly France and Spain, important protection measures have benefited the species. These measures include the rescue of nestlings from combine harvesters, chicks being moved to safety during harvesting and a small area around the nest being left untouched by the farmer. Mediterranean populations are highly dependent on these measures owing to high nest-failure rates in the absence of intervention (Orta *et al.* 2014). Satellite tracking of this species began in 2005 (Trierweiler *et al.* 2007).

Conservation Actions Proposed

Tall vegetation must be left during the breeding season, with high rates of chick mortality when this is harvested on agricultural land. The key management practices that include moving nestlings to safe places during harvesting, and leaving areas unharvested around the vicinity of nests should be continued (Orta *et al.* 2014). In addition research on migration routes and the location and structure of stopover sites and wintering quarters of the species would assist the development of conservation measures (Trierweiler 2009).

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Map (see overleaf)

European Regional Assessment



Circus pygargus

Range

■ Extant (breeding)

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



Map created 05/12/2015

