

BONELLI'S EAGLE

SCIENTIFIC NAME: **Aquila fasciata**

CONSERVATION STATUS: **Least Concern (LC)**

FACT FILE

- PHYLUM: CHORDATA
- CLASS: AVES
- ORDER: ACCIPITRIFORMES
- FAMILY: ACCIPITRIDAE
- LENGTH: 55–65 cm
- WINGSPAN: 140–170 cm
- CLUTCH SIZE: Usually 2 eggs
- REGIONALLY ENDANGERED
- FAVOURITE FOOD: RABBITS



In Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Bonelli's Eagle stands as the defining predator of the Mediterranean massifs. Its French population is confined almost entirely to the southern Mediterranean belt and within **PACA** the principal stronghold lies in the limestone hills of the **Bouches-du-Rhône**. Smaller numbers persist in parts of the Var but the regional population remains highly localised and of national importance. **Each breeding territory carries real weight in the future of the species in France.**

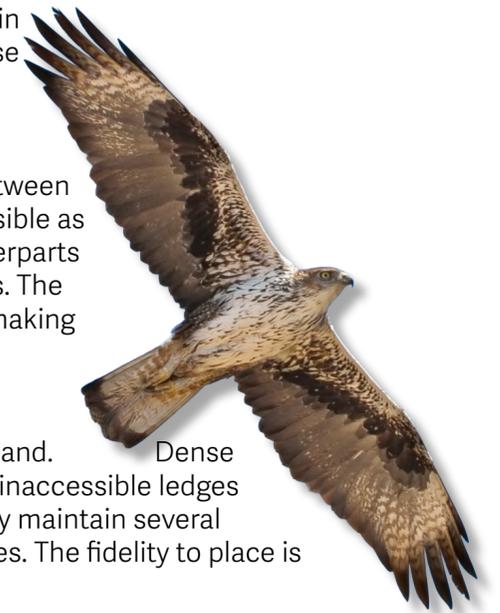


THE LORD OF THE GARRIGUE

Bonelli's Eagle is a medium-large eagle built for power and control rather than altitude. Measuring between 55 and 65 centimetres in length with a wingspan of 140 to 170 centimetres it combines muscular structure with agility. Females are larger than males and may reach two and a half kilograms in weight. Broad relatively short wings and a long tail allow rapid turns and precise acceleration through broken terrain. This is a bird engineered for cliffs and scrub not for high alpine plateaux.

Adult plumage is pale below with fine dark streaking and a strong contrast between body and flight feathers. A clean white patch across the lower back is often visible as the bird banks along a cliff face. Juveniles are warmer in tone with rufous underparts and reduced contrast gradually acquiring adult plumage over four to five years. The extended maturation period slows recruitment into the breeding population making juvenile survival critical.

In PACA the species is inseparable from garrigue. It occupies limestone escarpments overlooking mosaics of open scrub pasture and scattered woodland. Dense forest and high mountain environments are avoided. Nest sites are placed on inaccessible ledges often on south-facing cliffs that provide early thermal lift and shelter. Pairs may maintain several alternative nests within a territory reusing and reinforcing them across decades. The fidelity to place is striking and territories can persist for many years.

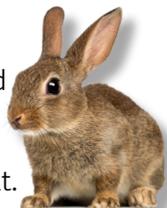


EMBLEMATIC OF THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION, BONNELLI'S EAGLE IS FRANCE'S MOST ENDANGERED BIRD OF PREY.

ECOLOGY

Breeding begins early in the Mediterranean winter. Courtship intensifies in January with eggs typically laid in February or March. Incubation lasts just over five weeks and fledging occurs towards late May or June. Two eggs are commonly laid though not all chicks survive to independence. Productivity depends on stable weather and reliable prey during late winter. Cold prolonged rain at this stage can reduce hunting success and affect chick survival. With such a small regional population the outcome of each breeding attempt matters.

Bonelli's Eagle hunts with directness and precision. It contours along ridgelines launches from elevated perches and pursues prey across uneven ground. Pigeons partridges corvids and rabbits form the core of its diet in Mediterranean France. The structure of the garrigue with its broken slopes and open patches favours this style of predation. The bird's manoeuvrability gives it dominance within this habitat.



Breeding territories commonly extend across tens of square kilometres shaped by prey availability and landscape structure. Established adults are largely sedentary defending these areas year-round. Juveniles disperse widely after fledging and face significant mortality particularly from infrastructure hazards such as poorly insulated power lines. For a species with delayed maturity and modest reproductive output first-year survival is a decisive factor.

THREATS

Bonelli's Eagle remains one of the most threatened birds of prey in PACA. Historic declines were driven by **persecution, disturbance from climbers and hikers, habitat loss and electrocution.**

Conservation measures including the insulation of dangerous pylons protection of nesting cliffs and long-term monitoring have stabilised the situation but **the population remains vulnerable.** Its restricted distribution means that sustained failure in only a few territories would have measurable regional consequences.



APEX

As a **top predator** of Mediterranean cliff ecosystems Bonelli's Eagle reflects the health of the garrigue itself. Its continued presence signals intact landscapes sufficient prey and relative tranquillity. In PACA it is not simply another raptor but the **emblematic ruler** of the limestone hills a species whose survival depends on both ecological integrity and sustained conservation commitment.

