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Editorial

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Editorial

This special issue of *Bird Study* brings together papers from the final conference of the European Science Foundation's Research Networking Programme 'Research and Monitoring for and with Raptors in Europe' (EURAPMON), held in Murcia, Spain, in March 2015. EURAPMON ran from 2010 to 2015 with funding from 15 research academies and ministries across Europe.

EURAPMON arose from recognition of the risks posed by environmental contaminants to human and wildlife health, and the opportunity provided by raptors, as sentinels, to better monitor such contaminants and thereby inform better chemicals management and reduce these risks. The aim of EURAPMON was to strengthen the contribution of research and monitoring for and with raptors in Europe to deliver biodiversity, environmental and human health benefits, including maintenance and recovery of raptor populations and their habitats, and reduced chemical threats to ecosystems and human health. More specifically, EURAPMON set out to establish a pan-European network for monitoring *for* and *with* raptors, to log and review existing raptor monitoring activity, to build consensus on monitoring priorities at a European scale and to spread best practices and build capacities.

EURAPMON broke new ground in creating a European network of researchers and practitioners involving both those working on monitoring of raptor populations (monitoring *for* raptors) and those working on monitoring of contaminants in raptors (monitoring *with* raptors). The network grew to include over 300 participants from 180 organizations in over 50 countries – including over 100 young scientists.

On the 'monitoring *for* raptors' side, EURAPMON delivered an inventory of existing monitoring schemes across Europe (Derlink *et al.* 2018). Many of these schemes were presented in a Special Issue of *Acrocephalus* in 2012 (vol. **33**[154/155]: 141–336), detailing the species monitored, extent of geographical coverage, strengths and weaknesses, priorities, main players and capacity-building activities. On the 'monitoring *with* raptors' side, EURAPMON delivered an inventory of existing work on contaminant monitoring with raptors in Europe (Gómez-Ramírez *et al.* 2014), a best practice sampling protocol (Espín *et al.* 2014) and a review of the types of samples that should be used to track trends in contamination using sentinel raptors (Espín *et al.* 2016).

The EURAPMON network has since spawned a European Union funded European Cooperation in Science and Technology action, 'European Raptor Biomonitoring Facility' (ERBFacility; www.erbfacility.eu), a new network supporting the use of raptors as sentinels of environmental contamination, in order to: (1) better assess the effectiveness of EU chemicals regulations; (2) enhance risk assessment of chemicals and (3) provide early warning of emerging contaminant problems. ERBFacility brings together those working in contaminant analysis, raptor collections (museums, specimen banks, research collections) and raptor monitoring in the field. ERBFacility involves participants from 35 countries and runs from 2017 to 2021.

EURAPMON has also underpinned key elements of a new €3.35 million EU-funded project demonstrating the systematic use of data from apex predators, including raptors, in EU chemicals management (LIFE APEX). LIFE APEX runs from 2018 to 2022.

The papers in this special issue provide a review of raptor and owl monitoring activity across Europe, present a number of monitoring case studies, and consider the monitoring of contaminants, emerging infectious diseases and environmental change with raptors, and links to human health. We hope this will provoke further interest in raptor research and monitoring and its relevance for environmental and human health.

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