

Conservation

For many decades raptor biologists have tied the conservation of certain owl species to tall forests. The Powerful Owl is a symbol of the fight against exploitation of forests, especially against clear-felling. 'Save the forests and we can save the owl', or vice versa. To save the Powerful Owl, according to Stephen Garnett (1992), we need an accurate understanding of the densities of owl populations, how many pairs nest in a specified area of square kilometres and the lifetime habitat use by a pair. How long do they live? How much land does a pair, an individual or a family need?

Biologists in North American and Europe study owls in forests for the same reasons. The Spotted Owl in Washington State, the Great Grey Owl in Manitoba, the Eagle Owl in Europe, gone for a time from the United Kingdom but returned now, represent wild creatures that live in wild places, often in forest. The smaller *Athene* owls such as the Burrowing Owl and Little Owl present different conservation problems, and the *Athene* group is interesting because the genus contains only a few species and each presents different conservation problems. Case studies of all these owls can help us understand conservation.