

Eagle Owl

Species Description

Scientific name: *Bubo bubo*

AKA: Eryr Dylluan (Welsh)

Native to: Widely distributed throughout Europe, Asia and North Africa

Habitat: Forest, woodland and farmland

A large, powerful owl, with dark orange eyes, long ear tufts and brown plumage with a length of 70 cm from beak to tail and a wingspan of 2 m. The eagle owl is commonly kept in captivity and, since the 18th century the species has regularly escaped or has been released in the UK. At present there are only a few established pairs that successfully breed, mainly in northern England.

If eagle owls were to spread in the UK, then populations of some native species of birds, including birds of prey, would be subject to increased pressure due to predation. The species may also come into conflict with humans as eagle owls may prey on red grouse in upland areas managed for shooting. The eagle owl is also recorded as being aggressive to humans and companion animals near its nest site. Escaped captive birds are often seen with jesses on their legs.

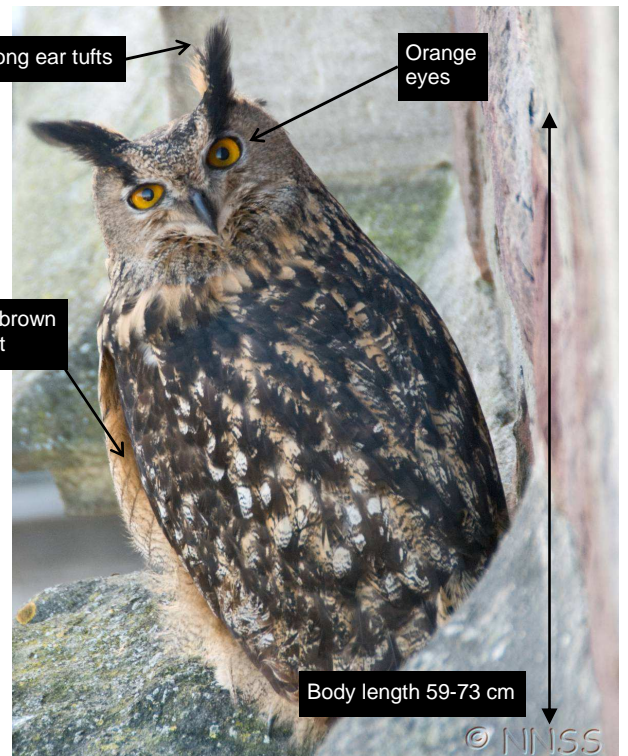
The Eagle owl is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England and Wales. As such, it is an offence to release or allow the escape of this species into the wild.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features

Male and female eagle owls are identical in plumage throughout the year and cannot be distinguished in the field. Juvenile birds resemble adults.



Identification throughout the year

The eagle owl is present in the UK throughout the year and retains the same plumage characteristics.

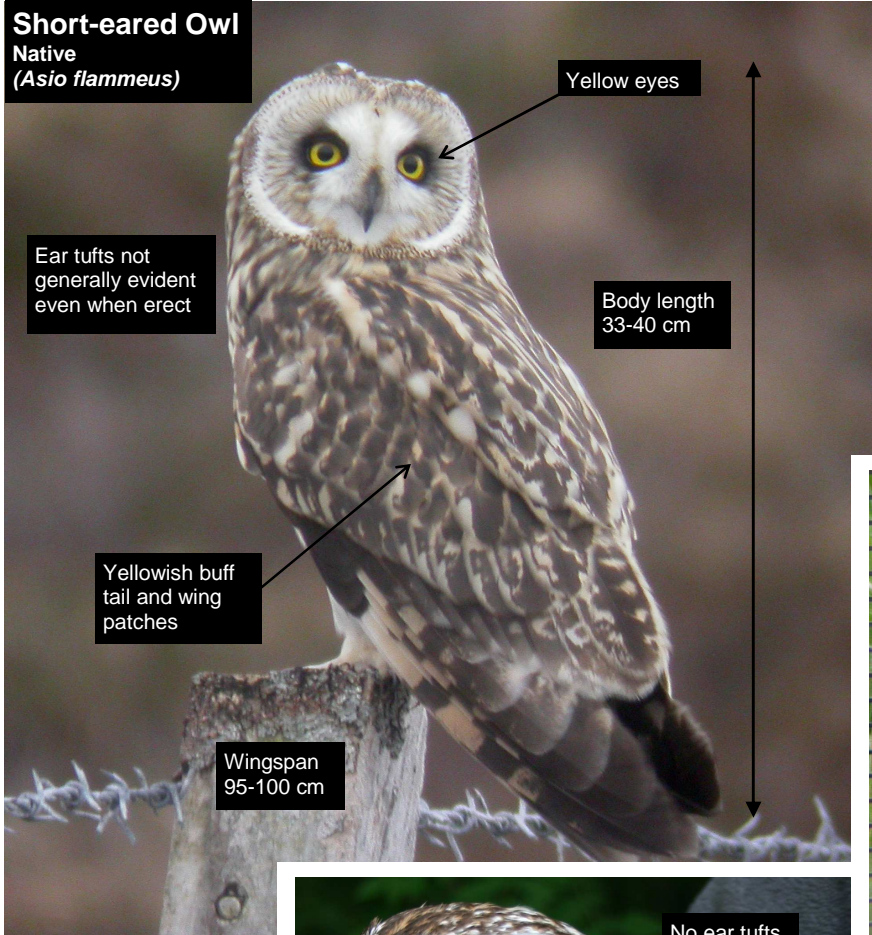
Distribution

Eagle owl pairs and individuals are reported throughout England and Scotland.

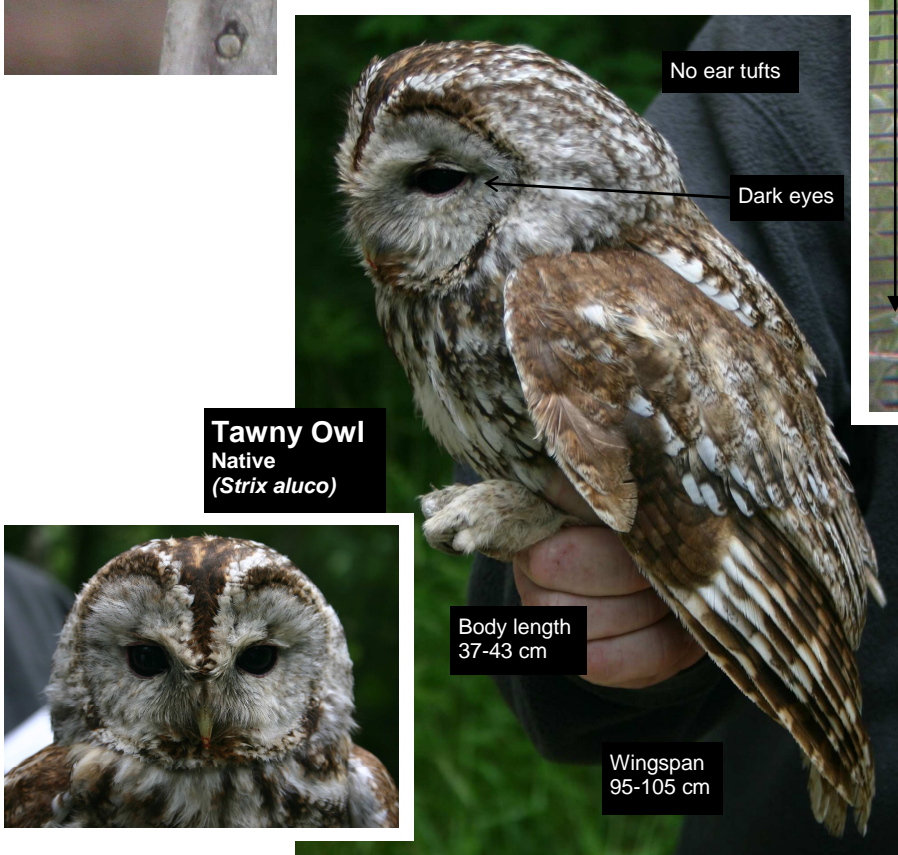
Similar Species

Eagle owl is the largest species of owl in the world and is considerably larger than any other owls in the UK.

Short-eared Owl Native (*Asio flammeus*)



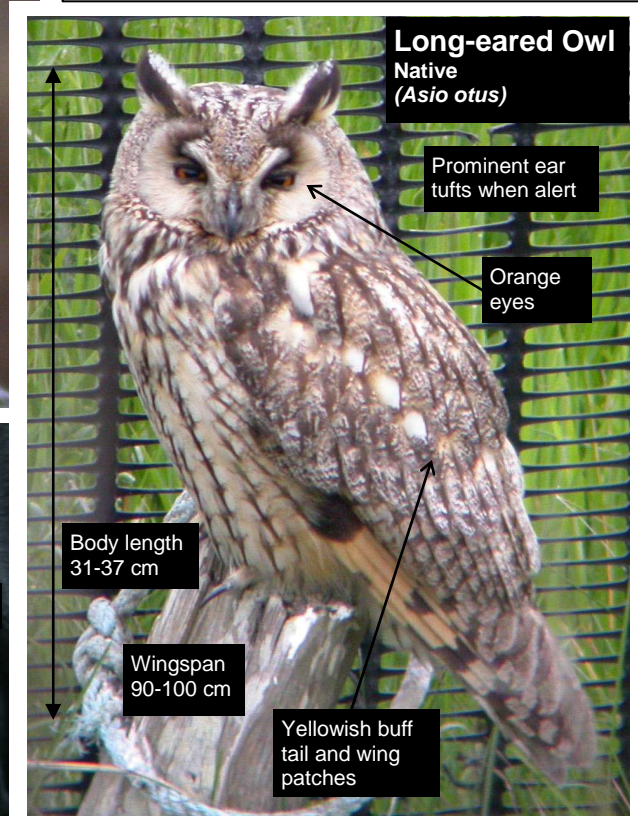
Tawny Owl Native (*Strix aluco*)



Field Signs

- Call - Can be very vocal during the breeding season with call carrying up to 1.5 km. Males have a monotonous 'buho' call, whilst females give a higher pitched 'u-hu'. The alarm call is a croaking 'grack'.
- Breeding season - Eagle owls in the UK usually begin egg laying in late February.
- Nest site - Generally on cliff-ledge or in crevice or on the ground on a steep slope.
- Eggs - White, elliptical and slightly glossy, similar in shape and colour to those of native owls in the UK, although larger.

Long-eared Owl Native (*Asio otus*)



References and further reading:

Melling, T, Dudley, S and Doherty, P (2008) The Eagle Owl in Britain. *British Birds* **101**, 478-490

Mullarney, K, Svensson, L, Zetterstrom, D and Grant, PJ (2001) "*Bird Guide*". Harper-Collins

Snow, D W and Perrins, C M (1998) "*The Birds of the Western Palearctic*". Oxford University Press