



La Pélite

The red gorge shows up in your mailbox when you least expect it.

Discovering...

Mountain owls

Two species live in France: The Eurasian pygmy owl and the boreal owl. Both are small, discreet, rare, and considered as vulnerable species in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur.

Because they are nocturnal, owls are hard to observe. But to mark their territory, warn potential rivals, and attract females, the males hoot which may give away their position. Knowing this, ornithologists found a technique to count the invisible birds: playing recordings! The call of the studied species is played using a tape recorder. If a bird answers, the species is present in the area. Of course, such inventories cannot be carried out any time, any which way, as it can disturb the birds. A precise scientific protocol has to be followed to avoid disturbing the nocturnal raptors.

The two potential species have been looked for all over the Gorges de Daluis Nature Reserve. The Eurasian pygmy owl does not seem to live there, but the boreal owl was heard in the Palud forest in 2016 and 2017. Indeed, many black woodpeckers live in this forest located on the north-facing slope; it appears to be the perfect nesting site for this little owl.

Meeting...

A keen photographer

Cédric Robion has been a bird enthusiast since he was a child. He has successfully combined work and hobby by becoming a nature photographer. In summer, he leads groups of adventurous hikers into the river bed of the



Tengmalm's owl © C. Robion

Daluis gorge. During winter, he works as a ski instructor in Valberg. He also spent five years monitoring a couple of short-toed snake eagles in the reserve.

Cédric took an interest in the then barely-known small owls while working at Mercantour National Park. Due to their lack of interactions with humans, the Eurasian pygmy owls and the boreal owls are peaceful and easy to approach.

You can find Cédric's pictures - the results of long hours spent outdoors- in his book *Mercantour Sauvage*. Nowadays, he photographs species such as bears and lynxes, covering the whole alpine region from the Jura Mountains to Slovenia.

Upcoming...

Educational outing

Saturday 22nd April, at 10 am, Guillaumes social

and community centre (EPI) will organise a free-entrance walk from the village to the *Pont de la Mariée*, with several educational stops. The reserve team will also be there!

Did you know...?

The boreal owl (Aegolius funereus)

This 25-centimetre tall owl weighs around 100 to 160 grams. It is mainly found in cold dense forests in the montane and subalpine zones, but also in larch forests from 1,000 to 2,200 metres above sea-level. Its white-spotted brown feathers inspired its Swedish name: "Pearl owl". Its favorite nesting sites are hollow trees or holes excavated by black woodpeckers.

If you spot its nesting site, wait and you may see it take a peek at whoever is passing by.

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