

Hen Harrier Reintroduction to Southern England



Adult female



Hen Harrier basics

- Open landscapes, hunts by sight & sound for small mammals & birds
- Reversed Size Dimorphism – female c. 500g & male c. 350g
- Females and juveniles known as ‘ringtails’
- Occupies moorland in UK, variety of lowland habitats & farmland in Europe & Asia
- Sky dancing display prior to breeding
- Easy to confuse with Montagu’s harrier

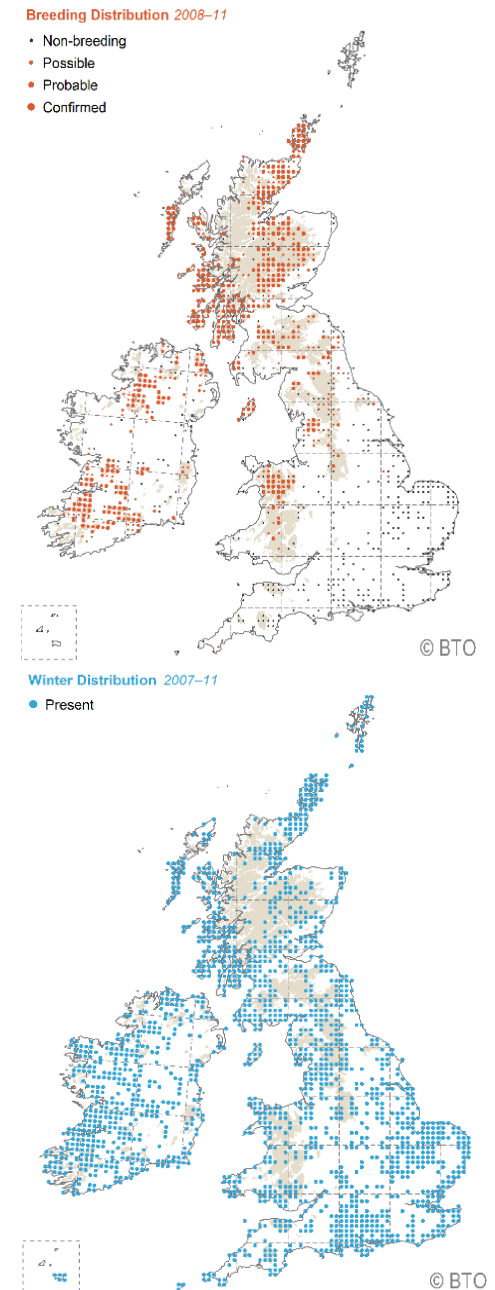




Phil Curtis

Current status

- 2016 survey estimated 545 breeding pairs in the UK
- Decline of 14% since previous census in 2010
- Only a few successful pairs in northern England (none in 2013) until recently
- Wintering population in England c.300 – 400 birds



Prior considerations for reintroductions

- Good evidence of historic presence
- Reasons for original loss are understood & no longer present
- No negative effect on important native wildlife
- Sufficient food supply and suitable habitat
- No impact on founding population



Project aims

- Establish a farmland breeding population
- Expand and strengthen the European range
- Develop conservation and research collaborations across Europe



Arable farmland as habitat

All three harriers on the continent have switched preferred breeding habitat from semi-natural to arable farmland.

France has 10,000 breeding pairs of hen harrier, a stable population.

Spain has about 370-600 breeding pairs, decreasing in north but increasing in some arable areas.

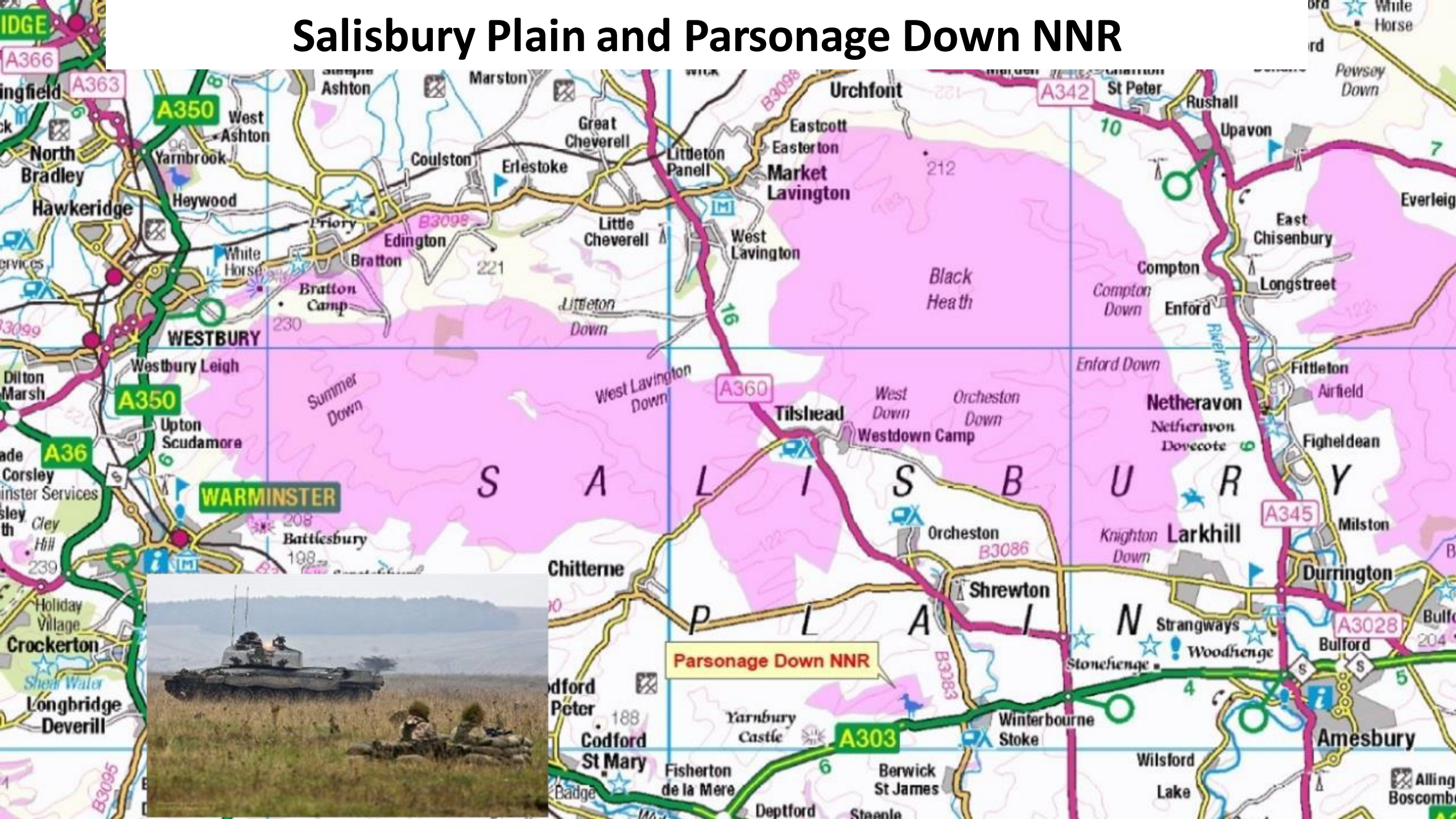
Harvesting is earlier to the south and nests are destroyed.







Salisbury Plain and Parsonage Down NNR



The plan

- Translocation site at Parsonage Down NNR on edge of Salisbury Plain
- 300 ha farm owned and managed by Natural England
- Release c 20 juveniles p.a. 5-6 year program, aiming to start in 2022-3
- Provide supplementary food for 6-8 weeks after release to imprint 'natal' area





Raise awareness with local land managers, shoots, MOD, farmer clusters & conservation groups









Monitoring and research

- Rigorous monitoring and research program (following IUCN guidelines)
- Supported by Zoological Society of London, University of Exeter and two PhD students
- Comprehensive health management scheme
- Aviary cameras linked to observation station & NE offices

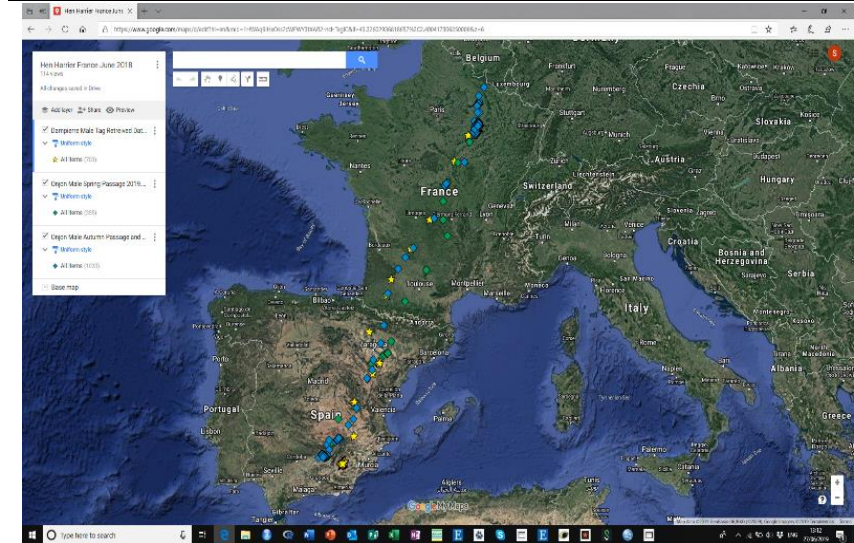


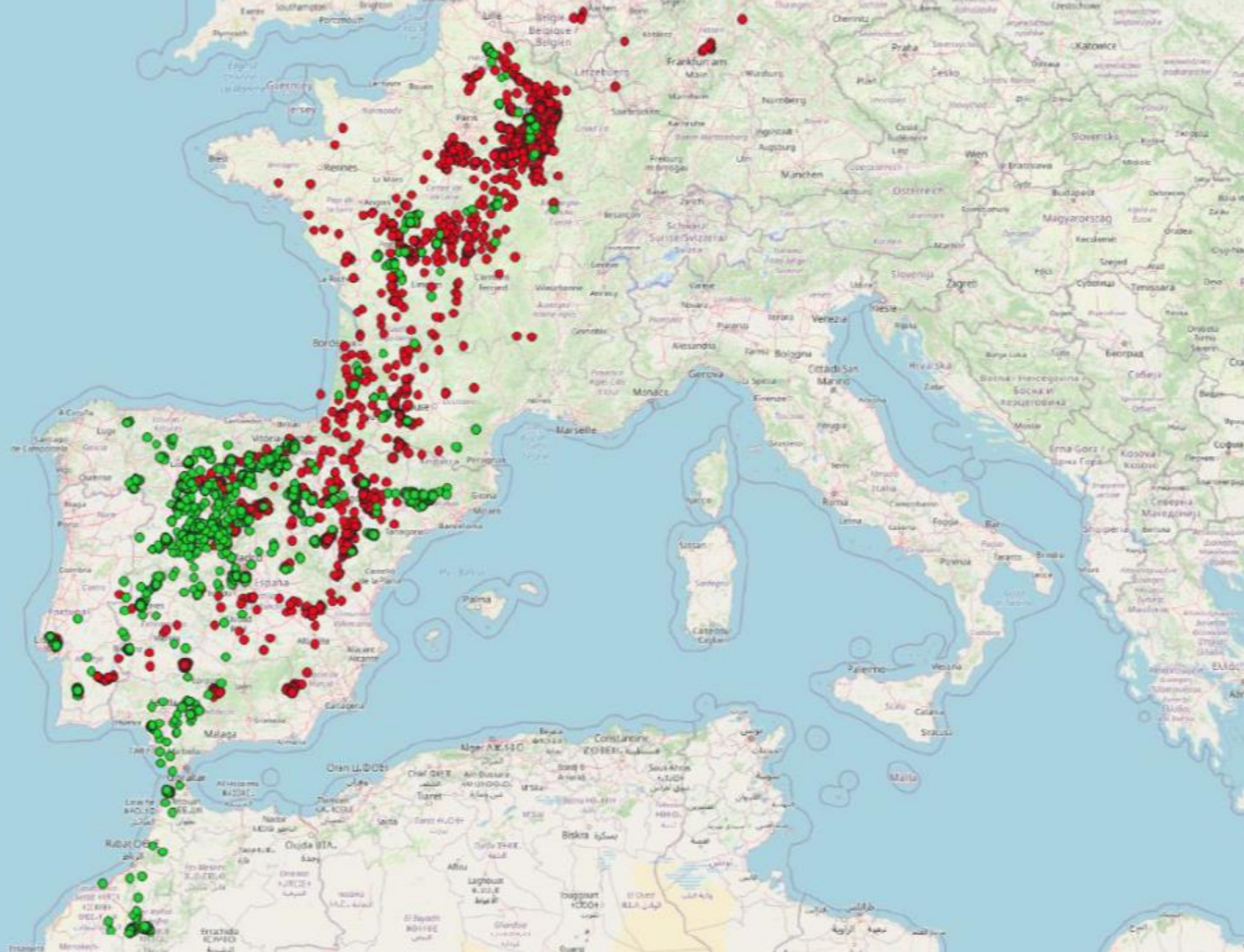


Baseline bird
& mammal
monitoring
around release
site

Satellite tracking

- GSM GPS tags with acceleration, orientation and temperature sensors
- Part of wider European study into hen harrier movement ecology
- All released birds will be tagged







2018 adult
male
tagged in
France

