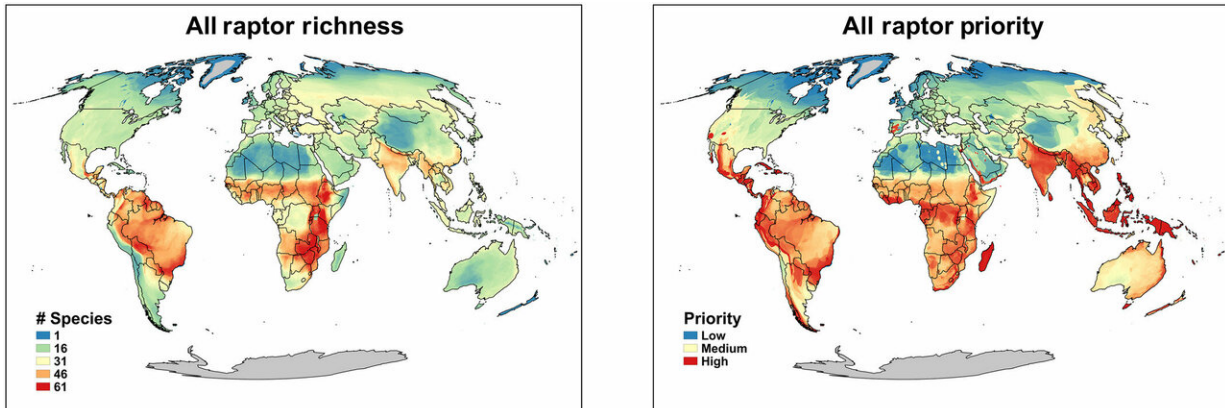


# Speaking up for invisible raptors

March 25 2019, by Paul Gabrielsen



Credit: University of Utah

Birds of prey such as owls, eagles, falcons and vultures are soaring and elegant predators. But many raptors worldwide have flown under the scientific radar and are all but invisible: Ten species of raptors, out of 557 total, comprise one-third of all raptor research, and one-fifth of all species have never been studied in a scientific publication. That's the conclusion of a recent paper in *Diversity and Distributions* by University of Utah researchers and their collaborators.

The most understudied raptor species tend to be those with small geographic ranges and those in less developed regions. Unfortunately, those same factors contribute to a species' extinction risk, along with other lifestyle factors, raising the possibility that some raptors may

become permanently invisible – extinct – before they've ever had a chance to be studied.

So the authors put together a global research priority list to help ornithologists and conservationists focus their efforts. The top of the list is the critically endangered Annobon Scops-owl, which lives on one West African island and doesn't appear in the scientific literature at all. Other high priority raptors live in Central and South America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia – ironic and discouraging because the highest-priority research areas have the fewest conservation resources available. Filling the [knowledge gaps](#), the authors write, will take some significant realignment of research resources.

These are the top 10 most-studied raptor species:

1. Common Barn owl
2. Peregrine Falcon
3. Bald Eagle
4. Northern Goshawk
5. Golden Eagle
6. Common Kestrel
7. American Kestrel
8. Spotted Owl
9. Eurasian Buzzard
10. Eurasian Sparrowhawk

And here are the top 10 species on the research priority list:

1. Annobon Scops-owl
2. Siau Scops-owl
3. Flores Hawk-eagle
4. Cuban Kite
5. Pernambuco Pygmy-owl

6. Moheli Scops-owl
7. Camiguin Boobook
8. Serendib Scops-owl
9. Romblon Boobook
10. Least Boobook

**More information:** Evan R. Buechley et al. Global raptor research and conservation priorities: Tropical raptors fall prey to knowledge gaps, *Diversity and Distributions* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/ddi.12901](https://doi.org/10.1111/ddi.12901)

Provided by University of Utah

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