

Company: Carmeuse

Location: Belgium

Objective The recolonisation of Carmeuse quarry sites by the Eurasian Eagle Owl.

Context The Eurasian Eagle Owl (*bubo bubo*) is an impressive species both because of its size (nearly 80 cm tall and weighing 3 kg for the female adult) and its appearance (speckled plumage, large crest, bright orange pupils).

It had totally disappeared from our regions after the Second World War and made a timid re-appearance in the eastern part of Belgium in the early 1980s. It appears that these first Eurasian Eagle owls come from Germany and the Central Eastern countries; they then gradually recolonised sites in the south of the country.

Solution For several years, Carmeuse Belgium has studied the development of the flora and fauna in its quarries, both in activity and after rehabilitation. Carmeuse is particularly careful to create favourable conditions for the creation of new habitats.

The scientists with whom Carmeuse works closely have ringed a number of young owls in order to study the development of the population and to follow the movements of these superb nocturnal raptors.

This operation was carried out in partnership with researchers from the Royal Natural Sciences Institute of Belgium, who are very familiar with climbing techniques as well as the very delicate technique of handling these birds.

Result The first observation on a Carmeuse site was conducted at the Frasnes quarry in May 1987. Since then, the species has recolonised several quarry sites, including every Carmeuse site in Belgium. Thus in 2008 seven nests were recorded in our Belgian quarries, both active and closed. These observations, made by specialists, have enabled us to count ten juveniles which, once fledged, will continue the recolonisation of the country by this fabulous bird. This rate of frequentation of our sites is particularly high. No less than 10 % of the Belgian population of Eurasian Eagle Owls have chosen to breed in our quarries – one Belgian owl out of ten is 'Carmeusian'!

Partners Royal Natural Sciences Institute of Belgium

