
**THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE SPANISH IMPERIAL EAGLE IN SPAIN AND
THOUGHTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND POLICY AS CONTRIBUTING
FACTORS IN THE CONSERVATION OF SPECIES**

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SUMMARY

This contribution reflects on the contributory role of environmental law and policy in the successful conservation interventions on behalf of the rare Spanish Imperial Eagle (*Aquila Adalberti*), with the aim of gaining insights that may be more universally applicable, including in jurisdictions such as South Africa. An overview of applicable international, European and Spanish laws and policies is given, and the role played by these instruments is considered together with successes attained with diverse conservation goals in respect of the Spanish Imperial Eagle. The exceptionally comprehensive character of the legal protection of the Spanish Imperial Eagle is highlighted, in conjunction with some extra-legal factors that have contributed to successful outcomes. While quantification of the role of the law in the conservation of a species remains elusive, it is probably safe to conclude that environmental law and policy have played a vital and central role in the improvement of the conservation status of the Spanish Imperial Eagle. It is submitted that the conservation interventions on behalf of the Spanish Imperial Eagle show that concerted legal and other conservation interventions can effectively halt and reverse the decline of an endangered species. However, such interventions are onerous and expensive and ideally, effective conservation measures should be in place before populations have declined to a critical level. Birds of prey face similar threats in South Africa and Spain, and a number of South African raptor species will soon be classified as endangered. While South African biodiversity laws and policy are similar to the European and Spanish laws in general import and methodology, the South African laws and policy are more restricted in scope, less detailed and less prescriptive. When comparing the use of Spanish and South African legislation in the

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conservation of birds of prey, sight must not be lost of the varying conservation needs of different species and the unequal resources available to different jurisdictions.

KEYWORDS: Environmental law and policy; biodiversity; Spanish Imperial Eagle; *Aquila Adalberti*; bird of prey; species; endangered; conservation; international wildlife law.