

*media release*

## **Issued by RSPB on behalf of the Great Bustard Project**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# **All of a flutter on Salisbury Plain**

Forget those catwalk extravagancies – Wiltshire’s great bustards are showing some real style on Salisbury Plain this Spring.

Dave Kjaer, photographer for the Great Bustard Project, caught these stunning images of one of the recently reintroduced males in full display.

Bath University researcher Kate Ashbrook, who is working with the project, said; “Seeing these birds showing off in all their finery is an unforgettable experience. This is the bird’s way of signaling that he’s in good condition, to both attract potential mates and repel rivals.”

The Great Bustard Project is successfully reintroducing great bustards to the UK. The project, assisted by EU Life+ funding, is run by a partnership of the RSPB, Great Bustard Group, University of Bath and Natural England.

David Waters from the Great Bustard Group said “Spring is the busiest time of year for us. I’ve recently been in Saratov, Russia working with Russian ornithologists to bring this year’s batch of young bustards to Wiltshire. Meanwhile colleagues in the UK are working hard monitoring the bustards previously released on Salisbury Plain.

“Those birds that are already out on the Plain will be on eggs soon, and we hope to see the first wild youngsters by the end of the month.”

The great bustard is a globally threatened species that is listed on Annex I of the EC Birds Directive and is also identified as a priority for LIFE+ funding.

It was formerly widely distributed across large parts of lowland Europe, but started to decline in the 18th century and is now absent from much of its original range. It became extinct from the UK in 1832, and from numerous other European nations over the rest of the 19th and the 20th centuries. It is responding well to conservation and many populations are now increasing.

Visitors are welcome to the great bustard release site to learn about the project and see the spectacular scenery and wildlife of Salisbury Plain. To book a visit phone 07817971327 or email [visit@greatbustard.org](mailto:visit@greatbustard.org)

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**For more information:**

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**Additional Notes**

1. The Great Bustard Group is a UK Registered Charity (number 1092515) that aims to establish a self-sustaining population of Great Bustards in the UK and create practical conservation measures for Great Bustards in Saratov, Russia. The group was created in 1998 to restore the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) population in the UK and to conserve existing Great Bustards throughout their range, particularly in Saratovskya, Russia. On Salisbury Plain a small bustard population is being created by releasing a number of birds each year.
2. The RSPB is the largest wildlife conservation organisation in Europe with over one million members. It speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Bird populations reflect the health of the planet on which our future depends. The RSPB became an official partner of the Great Bustard Consortium in August 2009.
3. Natural England is an independent public body whose purpose is to protect and improve England's natural environment and encourage people to enjoy and get involved in their surroundings. Natural England have been involved in the Great Bustard Reintroduction project since its inception, particularly the licensing aspects and the monitoring of released birds.
4. The University of Bath is one of the UK's leading universities. Our Mission is to deliver world class research and teaching, educating our graduates to become future leaders and innovators, and benefiting the wider population through our research, enterprise and influence. Our courses are innovative and interdisciplinary and we have an outstanding record of graduate employment. We are ranked in the UK top 15 of universities in The Guardian, Times, Sunday Times and Independent national tables. There will be one fulltime post at the university dedicated to the monitoring of the bustards.
5. LIFE is the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU, as well as in some candidate, acceding and neighbouring countries. Since

1992, LIFE has co-financed some 3115 projects, contributing approximately €2 billion to the protection of the environment. In 2010 the Great Bustard Project was awarded a €2.2million grant to enlarge the project over the next five years.

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