

popolazione nidificante e nel 2002 sono state censite 390-420 coppie (SEO/BIRDLIFE, 2003). La nidificazione è stata accertata anche in Nord Africa, dove nel 1994 una colonia di 13 coppie è stata scoperta nella foce dell'Oued Massa, nel Marocco atlantico (ROUSSEAU, 1994); successivamente, nel sito sono stati osservati individui estivi, ma la riproduzione non è stata più riscontrata (EL GHAZI & FRANCHIMONT, 1997).

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FIELD OBSERVATION OF THE CAPE VERDE BUZZARD, *BUTEO (BUTEO) BANNERMANI*, CONFIRMS CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD, *BUTEO RUFINUS*

RIASSUNTO – *L'osservazione sul campo della Poiana di Capo Verde, Buteo (buteo) bannermani, conferma la sua stretta parentela con la Poiana codabianca, Buteo rufinus.*

The rareness of the Cape Verde Buzzard, *Buteo (buteo) bannermani*, is a general opinion in literature. Let alone the lack of field studies, even the num-

ber of museum specimens, with five to six birds in European and in US Museum altogether (NAUROIS, 1994), is very scanty. The resident buzzards of the Cape Verde archipelago have been treated traditionally as a small-sized subspecies of the Common Buzzard, *Buteo buteo*, and the birds examined have usually suggested only slight differences from the nominate form (see JAMES, 1984, for data and literature). However NAUROIS (1973, see also 1994) found similar body proportions to the North African resident form of the Long-legged Buzzard, *Buteo rufinus cirtensis*. JAMES (1984) suggested that wandering individuals of *cirtensis* reached Cape Verde, but he stated that the resident buzzards were not differentiable from nominate *buteo*. HAZEVOET (1995) proposed that *bannermani* would be phylogenetically closer to *cirtensis* than to *buteo*, but he doubted that *cirtensis* was close to *rufinus*. CLOUET & WINK (2000) tried confirming Naurois' finding by the means of a molecular analysis, and indeed *bannermani* and *rufinus*, one individual for each form, clustered well separate from the few *buteo*, or *buteo*-like, individuals sampled. With good reason, however, these authors admitted the risk of drawing conclusions from such small samples. The phylogenetic tree they propose has two individuals from France (nominate *buteo*) less close to each other than one of them is to the Azores Buzzard, *Buteo buteo rothschildi*, which is quite a distinct form both morphologically and behaviourally (LONDEI, 1995). In my opinion this strongly suggests that, when molecular analysis is applied to buzzards, differences between individuals in the same taxon may easily obscure differences between taxa. Obtaining congruent results from various kinds of studies is especially important for conclusions on rare forms. As the Long-legged Buzzard can be distinguished in the field from the Common Buzzard by a complex of morphological and behavioural traits (though smaller *Buteo rufinus cirtensis* is more *buteo*-like in appearance), an important contribution to the phylogeny of the Cape Verde Buzzard may result from local observations performed in the light of these traits.

On 14 August 2003 I saw three to four buzzards together at Chã de Pedras on the Island of Santo Antão, Cape Verde. They indulged in aerobatics along the rock-faces just above the village, in the heat of a sunny mid-afternoon. They were very vocal and did not show any intraspecific aggression, which suggested a family party. The presence of at least one young bird among them was suggested by the clumsy reactions this bird had when repeatedly attacked by a Neglected Kestrel, *Falco (tinnunculus) neglectus*, which forced the much larger buzzard to take cover under a protruding rock and, once on the ground, lean backwards with spread wings (a defensive posture). I recorded movements and vocalizations on videotape. Through direct observation and the examination of the recorded material I have tried detecting *rufinus*-like traits in these birds.

Colours - HAZEVOET (1995) stated that adult Cape Verde Buzzards are invariably dark-rufous-brown, heavily marked on underparts. As far as I could detect from a distance, the birds I observed varied in colours, which, however, might be explained with the presence of young or moulting birds. The subject

in Fig. 1(a) was a moulting bird, as evidenced by the irregular length of some feathers in its tail. Its appearance in colours is almost the opposite of a typical Long-legged Buzzard, as its head and chest are uniformly darker than the underparts behind. However, this would be an unusual coloration for a Common Buzzard too. As typically occurs in the Long-legged rather than the Common Buzzard, one or two birds showed a lightly coloured (white to whitish) area along the whole length of the underwing, conspicuously bordered by dark coverts and black trailing edge. Accordingly, the one bird observed from above showed a conspicuous wing panel in the primaries.

Silhouette in flight - More eagle-like proportions (taking the Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*, as a model) with longer wings and tail best differentiate the Long-legged Buzzard from the Common Buzzard in flight. In particular, the Long-legged has longer primaries with respect to the secondaries. Although they looked more compact overall, the birds I observed were still reminiscent of the much larger Long-legged Buzzard in wing proportions and tail length when compared to the nominate form of the Common Buzzard (Fig. 1b). Longer primaries are even more evident in comparison with the Azores Buzzard (Fig. 1 in LONDEI, 1995).

Flight action. - In direct flight, I found about the same wing-beat frequency (4/sec) as for Common Buzzards, whereas the Long-legged Buzzard usually performs slower wing-beats (CRAMP & SIMMONS, 1980). This, however, may be a size-dependent trait. More similar to the Long-legged than to the Common Buzzard, the birds I observed soared with V-raised wings and glided with inner wing raised and flattish primaries. The overall pattern of their flight appeared much more buoyant than would be usual for Common Buzzards, which points to a lighter built (more ample wings and tail with respect to body size) in the Cape Verde Buzzard. This finds confirmation in Fig. 1.

Voice - Voice does not seem a sure criterion to separate the Long-legged from the Common Buzzard (see CRAMP & SIMMONS, 1980), and my recording from Cape Verde would produce poor sonograms because of the distance of the birds and some noise from human activity nearby. Nevertheless, the recorded mewing calls lasted less than one second each, decidedly less than those of a Common Buzzard, which matches a reported feature of Long-legged Buzzard vocalizations.

Conclusions - Most traits of the buzzards I observed in Cape Verde were similar to those of the Long-legged rather than the Common Buzzard. This is in line with the molecular evidence from CLOUET & WINK's (2000) study and both kinds of evidence confirm NAUROIS' (1973) early finding. JAMES' (1984) hypothesis of wandering *Buteo rufinus cirtensis* individuals from continental Africa, is not supported, as *rufinus*-like traits appeared in birds that had most probably bred in Cape Verde.

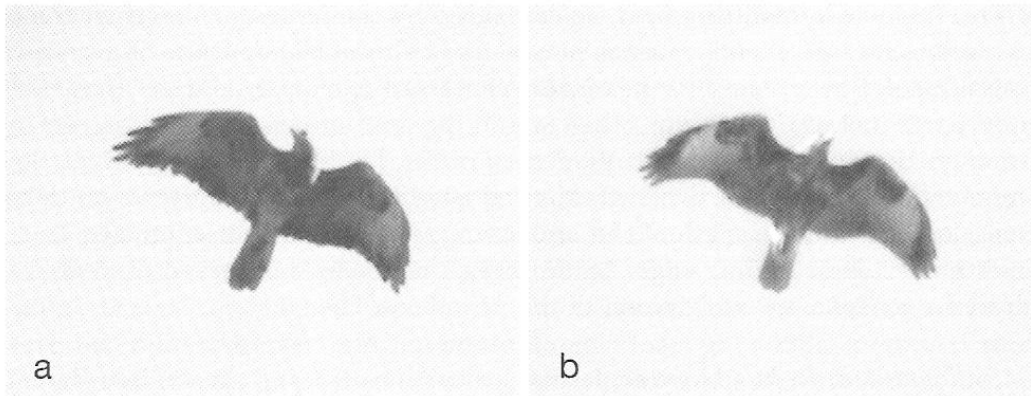


Fig. 1 - Buzzards from (a) Cape Verde and (b) Northern Italy in the same gliding posture.

Assuming there were *rufinus*-like birds in the ancestry of the Cape Verde Buzzard, a misleading *buteo*-like appearance of the extant form may be explained, colours apart, by a tendency to a more compact built (in addition to smaller size) in insular buzzards. Reduction in wing and tail length seems to have occurred in the Azores Buzzard too (LONDEI, 1995). Thus the same tendency may have produced different results: while the originally *buteo*-like Azores Buzzard would have diverged from its original shape, the Cape Verde would have approached a *buteo*-like shape from a different origin.

Different origin might also explain the rareness of the Cape Verde Buzzard compared to the other buzzards that live on mid-Atlantic islands and would all be more closely related to the Common Buzzard. NAUROIS (1973) suggested that the Cape Verde Buzzard suffered from competition with the Black Kite, *Milvus migrans*. The Black Kite has not settled on other mid-Atlantic islands, but its expansion in Cape Verde seems to have been a recent and short-lasting phenomenon, whereas the Cape Verde Buzzard has probably never been common (HAZEVOET, 1995). Relying probably on the same main food (grasshoppers and lizards) as the buzzards on the same islands, *tinnunculus*-like kestrels are not less common on Cape Verde than Canary, or Madeira, islands. On the contrary, being somewhat restricted to arid habitat and avoiding farmland (CRAMP & SIMMONS, 1980), the Long-legged Buzzard is usually a less common species than the Common Buzzard. Something of the ecological differences between the Long-legged and the Common Buzzard may have persisted in derived insular forms.

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GROUND JAYS (GEN. *PODOCES*): THE CORVINE ADAPTATION TO RUN

RIASSUNTO - *I podoci (genere Podoces): adattamento corvino alla corsa.*

Vivendo in regioni semidesertiche dell'Asia Centrale, questi corvidi, vicini per origine alle ghiandaie, si sono adattati a muoversi velocemente sul terreno. Tuttavia il movimento delle zampe sembra esagerato e ricorda più quello di un mammifero che di un uccello corridore. Anche se più veloce, l'andatura dei podoci è dondolante come la tipica camminata dei corvi.

Crows, jays, and their close relatives (tribe Corvini) are mostly not cursorial birds. When on the ground, very arboreal species only hop and less arboreal ones usually walk in a sedate manner, though they turn to hopping to go faster. Thus the four species in the genus *Podoces*, which all inhabit semi-deserts in Central Asia and move by running on the ground rather than flying, are exceptional in this respect. However, they are also different from other cursorial birds in gait. Biddulph's Ground Jay *Podoces biddulphi* and Pander's Ground Jay *Podoces panderi* are both called "ambling birds" in local languages (LUDLOW & KINNEAR, 1933; DEMENTIEV & GLADKOV, 1954), which may suggest some mammalian-like gait. Indeed, on seeing my first living ground jay (LONDEI, 2000), which was a Henderson's Ground Jay *Podoces hendersoni* running at some distance, I mistook it for a small mammal. When I observed the bird more closely, I had the impression of an exaggerated leg movement for a bird, not only because of the long pace but also because, unlike most terrestrial birds, while