

# MIGRATORY RAPTORIAL BIRDS OF BANGLADESH

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## ABSTRACT

The status of various migratory raptors wintering in Bangladesh is described, from studies made in 1968–74 and 1979–82. Fifteen species were observed, most of which are declining as a result of habitat destruction and other adverse factors.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the status of various migratory raptors that winter in Bangladesh. It is based on observations made in various districts during 1968–74 and 1979–82.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

### **Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*)**

Rare in Bangladesh. Only one seen during the present study, on the Curzon Hall Campus, University of Dhaka, in 1969.

### **Large Pariah Kite (*Milvus migrans lineatus*)**

A common kite in Bangladesh, seen in large numbers every year in Dhaka and the Sundarbans. Birds arrive in Dhaka in mid-August and the majority (800) leave before the end of March, with some remaining until the first week of May; thus the average duration of their stay in Bangladesh is about nine months. Numbers in Dhaka were estimated at 850–1150 individuals during 1979–82. They usually roosted in rain trees (*Enterolobium samon*) between the emergency gate of Dhaka Medical College Hospital and a playground of Dhaka University. About 55 rain trees are situated on both sides of this road, 15 of which were used by the kites, with up to about 60 birds per tree.

The birds forage around the slaughter-houses and rubbish dumps, but also take some dead and living small mammals such as *R. rattus*, *R. norvegicus*, *Suncus murimus*, *Bandicota indica*, *B. bengalensis* and *Mus musculus*, together with some snakes, lizards, toads, frogs, various kinds of fish, crabs and insects.

In the Sundarbans forests about 100 kites were recorded roosting at Dhanmari forest station in the Chandpai Range near Monghla Port; they also concentrate in

various fish-drying spots such as Dublar Char, Katka and Kachikhali, where they feed mainly on saline-water fish and snakes.

Moult starts immediately after their arrival and continues for five to six months.

**Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)**

Both rare in Bangladesh. The Goshawk was reported from Bhawal National Park, Dhaka (Haque, pers. comm.) and the Sparrowhawk was observed in Pabna, Madhupur National Park, Tangail, Dhaka, the Sundarbans mangrove forest, Bhawal National Park, Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts.

**Steppe (Tawny) Eagle (*Aquila rapax nipalensis*)**

Rare in Bangladesh. Seen in wooded areas round the village of Pabna, and in the Khulna range of the Sundarbans.

**Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)**

A rare visitor, which usually comes to Bangladesh in September and leaves in March. Observed once in Pabna, in 1969; two or three times in Chittagong Hill Tracts, in 1979; and in the Sundarbans, in 1983.

**Pied Harrier (*Circus melanoleucus*)**

Frequent in Bangladesh between October and April. Observed in Pabna, Dhaka, Khulna, Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts, Tangail and Mymensingh.

**Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*)**

An uncommon migrant, observed in Pabna and at the periphery of the Sundarbans. First seen in November near Aricha, Dhaka. Ali & Ripley (1978) mention that the bird spreads to southern India and Ceylon by October/November, mostly leaving again by March/April. It is a solitary bird and usually hunts in the cultivated fields at the edge of wooded villages.

**Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*)**

Rare in Bangladesh; its habits and habitat are more or less the same as for the Pied Harrier.

**Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)**

A rare migrant, only observed at the periphery of the Sundarbans mangrove forests. It usually frequents and hunts in the reeds inside the forest, perching at the forest edge when not hunting in daytime and when roosting at night.

**Common (Eurasian) Kestrel (*Falco t. tinnunculus*)**

A frequent migrant in Bangladesh, regularly seen many times in different districts. Its period of residence may be the same as in India, between September/October and March/April (Ali & Ripley 1978). It frequents crop-lands at the edge of villages and roadsides.

**Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*)**

Rare in Bangladesh, this kestrel was observed only once, in Faridpur in December.

**Changeable Hawk-eagle (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*), Honey Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*) and Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)**

These also occur in Bangladesh, but their status is uncertain (Ali & Ripley 1978; Rashid 1967; Ripley 1961).

## CONSERVATION PROBLEMS

The populations of migratory raptors in Bangladesh are rapidly decreasing, a phenomenon associated with destruction of habitat, particularly forested areas, for building developments and agriculture; also drainage of wetlands, use of DDT and decline of prey species. Many raptors die through eating poisoned carcasses. Fish-eating raptors such as the Osprey have decreased earlier, due to rapid loss of large water areas.

These problems could be mitigated if: (1) suitable trees were retained uncut and other trees were planted for use in hunting and roosting; (2) selected water areas were maintained for fish- and snake-eating species; (3) the uses of pesticides were limited around raptor habitats; and (4) education and publicity programmes were initiated.

## REFERENCES

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