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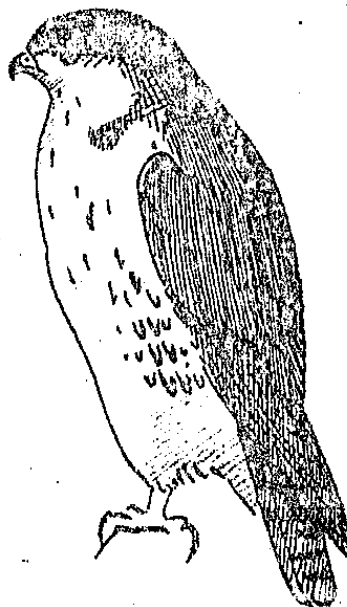
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NOTES

An Unidentified Buzzard in Sokoto. On 3rd, 4th and 5th January 1967 a buzzard Buteo sp. was seen at Tubkin Madareri, Sokoto Province (for description and location of this tubki see p. 99). After several poor and fleeting views were given, a good view was at last obtained on 5th January, as the bird perched 60 metres away down-sun at 0800 hrs. It was identified as a Buteo by its shape, size, posture and flight characteristics, and this was clinched when it called, a typical mewing "piuu" which sounded to my ear just like the call of the European Buzzard B. buteo. I am satisfied that it was not a Red-tailed Buzzard B. aeneus, the only Nigerian species, since this would appear to be one of the few buzzards with scarcely any plumage variation, and none of the characters of the present specimen described below match B. aeneus. The specimen is figured at the right, re-drawn from field sketches.



Description : forehead, crown, nape, mantle, back, rump and upper surface of wings uniform earth brown, the forehead and crown perhaps somewhat warmer brown, and a suggestion of some pale feather-edgings on back; capped appearance; upperside of tail brown with cinnamon wash, especially distally, and with 5+ equally-spaced indistinct narrow darker bands. Sides on neck earth brown, this shade extending as a patch onto the sides of the chest; cheeks slightly paler brown, and lores very pale; throat, breast and flanks white, with a few narrow black streaks on throat and breast, becoming large and conspicuous V or V shaped marks on sides of lower breast and flanks. These marks were more-or-less aligned into about 4 rows, and the posterior-most ones were the largest and were clearly demarcated from the immaculate whitish or pale buff belly and under-tail coverts. Underwing surface white with some dark markings not well seen; in flight an indefinite pale patch shows on upper wing at base of primaries; at rest wings fall about 2 cm short of tail. Bill small, dark, cere pale whitish, eye dark (brown); legs and feet dirty pale ochre or pale yellow; 'tarsus' naked, appeared rather long. About size of B. buteo, or slightly smaller.

Identity : on geographical grounds the two most likely candidates are Buteo buteo and the Long-legged Buzzard B. rufinus. Most Buteo species are subject to considerable plumage variation, but the above description does not correspond with any plumages of African or Western Palearctic buzzards as given in Bannerman (1953), Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1957)

Peterson et al. (1966), Cave & MacDonald (1955) or Grossman & Hamlet (1965); i.e. B. buteo, B. rufinus, the Rough-legged Buzzard B. lagopus, the Steppe Buzzard B. vulpinus, the Eastern Steppe Buzzard B. menetriesi, the Mountain Buzzard B. oreophilus, the Jackal Buzzard B. rufofuscus, or B. auguralis.

Apart from the Cape Verde Is. B. buteo bannermani, this species is not known to occur in West Africa; however a number of examples of Long-legged Buzzards B. rufinus have now been recorded, including one sight record from Nigeria (Hopson, 1965), and five specimens and sight records in Senegal (Morel & Roux, 1966). The latter consist of : one B. r. rufinus (Eurasia) captured in 1913, one B. r. cirtensis (North Africa) captured 1961, one B. r. rufinus collected 1964, and two seen 1965. C.H.Fry

References

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Escape-Diving in Egyptian-Plover Chick and Black Crake. It is probably the case that most birds closely associated with water can swim. That an adult Black Crake Limnocorax limnocorax should do so is not particularly surprising, but it is worth placing on record that one which panicked on walking into (but not getting caught up by) a mist-net set in reed-beds at Tubkin Madareri, Sokoto Province (See p.), escaped underwater, re-appearing about two metres away. It may have swum or clung to underwater vegetation.

On the lower Kaduna River, near Bida, I saw several chicks of Egyptian-Plovers Pluvianus aegyptius in mid-April 1965. One of these, about a week old, I chased across a sand-bar to the water's edge, where it jumped in without hesitation, immediately submerged, and 'flew' underwater using its wings for about 20 metres. After 15 - 20 seconds it surfaced in midstream, where I caught it and found it scarcely wetted. The edge of the sand bar formed a cliff a few inches high. The water was clear and an excellent view was had of the first few metres of the chick's 'flying' progress.