Notes

Greylag Goose nesting in pine tree

On 14th May 2005, I was shown the nest of a Greylag Goose *Anser anser* in a pine *Pinus* tree in Kent. I was able to observe the nest from a window in a first-floor flat in Brasted, adjacent to the busy A25, looking 40 m across communal grounds to the 20-m-high tree. The goose was sitting along a branch of the pine, only about 1–2 m from the top (plate 176). It was impossible to see what was under the sitting bird, and there was no sign of an old nest, but I assume that there must have been some sort of platform for the goose to lay on/in. The nearest water to the site is 1 km to the northwest.

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176. Nest-site of Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Brasted, Kent, May 2005.

On 20th May, the parent bird flew down to the lawn and honked encouragement at the young. They immediately left the nest one after the other, bouncing down through the branches; five of the six survived. The young became separated from the parent in the enclosed grounds, and were eventually gathered up and transported to Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve.

BWP states: '[nest] on ground, often sheltered hollow, or at base of tree, under bush or in reedbed, also on rafts of vegetation in rivers… of 463 nests in Czechoslovakia… 19.7% in pollarded willows (Salix)… rarely more than 10 m from water and then only on islands.' Eddie Chapman (*in litt.*) has commented that there are records from Norway and other European countries of Greylags nesting in pines. There have been other records in *BB* concerning Greylag Geese nesting in trees (for example *Brit. Birds* 95: 189), but this seems an extraordinary nest-site.

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Does the Honey-buzzard feed during migration?

There are two distinct feeding strategies among long-distance migrant raptors: some species hunt during their migration, while others store fat before migrating. In the latter group, individuals require fat deposition amounting to 15–25% of lean body mass for their migration (Gessaman 1979; Candler & Kennedy 1995; Smith *et al.* 1986). Some authors suggest that, in soaring raptors like the Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, weight loss during migration optimises the use of thermal currents (Brown quoted by Gensbøl 1992). Conversely, raptors which use mostly powered flight (e.g. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, kites *Milvus* and harriers *Circus*) usually feed during migration (Cramp & Simmons 1980; Kerlinger 1989; Gensbøl 1992; Blanco 1994, 1997; Yosef 1996; Alerstam & Hedenström 1998). Smith *et al.* (1986) estimated that 'although 100 g of fat would sustain a soaring Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* for more than 20 days, powered flight would exhaust this fuel reserve in less than five days'.

In the central Mediterranean region, several species of Accipitriformes are regularly observed feeding during both spring and autumn migration. In particular, Black Kites *M. migrans*, Marsh *C. aeruginosus*, Montagu's *C. pygargus* and Pallid Harriers *C. macrourus* were observed hunting over many small islands at the Strait of Messina and other sites in Italy (Giordano *et al.* 1995; Agostini & Logozzo 1998; Agostini & Panuccio 2003; Pandolfi & Sonet 2003; Panuccio *et al.* 2004; Premuda *et al.* 2004; pers. obs.). Among soaring raptors, Short-toed Eagles *Circaetus gallicus* were observed hunting over the island of Marettimo during autumn migration (Agostini pers. obs.). In the case of the Honey-buzzard, birds are regularly seen drinking while on migration in the Middle East, although at present there is no evidence that this species feeds during migration (Gensbøl 1992; Yosef 1996; Hake *et al.* 2003).

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177. Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* with distended crop, Calabrian Apennines, southern Italy, August 2006.

Passage of Honey-buzzards along the Calabrian Apennines, southern continental Italy, is well documented (see Agostini & Logozzo 1997). In autumn 2005, 3,458 Honey-buzzards were noted between 24th August and 12th September 2005. Close observations revealed that 15 birds showed a full crop and, of these, 11 were adults. Nine of the 15 (60%) were observed on 26th August. Two individuals with distended crops were photographed (plate 177). Only those individuals that were extremely close (<100 m) could be checked with confidence, so many others with a full crop may have passed undetected. Visual observation of crop distension is evidence of recent food ingestion (Shelley & Benz 1985; Pandolfi & Sonet 2003), so we suggest that hungry or opportunistic Honey-buzzards occasionally feed during migration, even if the majority fast in an attempt to minimise migration time and optimise the use of thermal currents. It is interesting to note that during observations at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (Pennsylvania, USA), Shelley & Benz (1985) reported 8% of 623 Broad-winged Hawks with distended crops and 25 individuals in active hunting.

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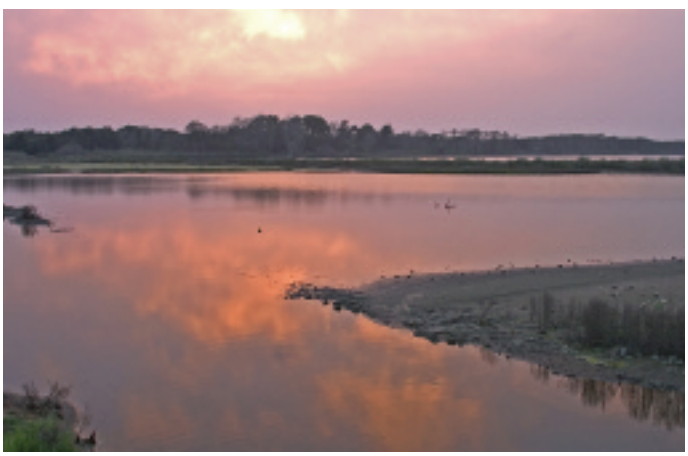
Comments on the roosting behaviour of Marsh Harriers during migration

Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* migrate across a broad front during both spring and autumn migration, and regularly undertake long powered flights over water, sometimes using islands as stopover sites (Cramp & Simmons 1980; Agostini & Logozzo 1998; Agostini *et al.* 2001, 2003; Panuccio *et al.* 2002; Sammut 2005). Although they are capable of migrating across the sea at night, many migrating Marsh Harriers appear to suspend migration when faced with a water barrier in the afternoon, electing instead to hunt before roosting at dusk (Panuccio *et al.* 2002; Agostini & Panuccio 2003).

Migrating raptors most commonly select trees in which to roost, and in areas where woodland is scarce are often attracted to small clumps of trees (Kerlinger 1989). Marsh Harriers usually roost among rank ground vegetation during the winter and breeding season (Cramp & Simmons 1980), but we have regularly observed migrant Marsh Harriers roosting in trees in the central Mediterranean region. Since many other migrant raptors roost in trees, it is perhaps not unexpected that Marsh Harriers should also do so. On Malta, up to 200 Marsh Harriers have roosted at Buskett (a small wooded area where hunting is banned) in recent years (Sammut 2005), while on Marettimo, Agostini & Logozzo (1998) reported a flock of 100 roosting in trees on 28th March 1998. On 1st April 2002, a flock of 50 landed in the only wood on the island of Ustica, while five were seen roosting on the rocks along the shore there in March 2002. During autumn migration, observations at Circeo Promontory, central Italy, revealed at least 150 Marsh Harriers roosting in trees on 13th September 2002, despite the close proximity of a large wetland area in a protected National Park with ample ground-roosting sites (plate 178). We have also observed tree-roosting Marsh Harriers at the Strait of Messina (max. nine in spring 2004); Aspromonte Mountain, southern continental Italy (max. 14 in autumn 2004); Pantelleria, western Sicily (max. 11 in autumn 2002); and Mount Capodarco, central Italy (max. three in spring 2003). Tree species does not appear



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178. Circeo National Park, Italy.