



Forest Buzzard

Bosjakkalsvoël

Buteo trizonatus

Two similar buzzard species breed in the Afromontane forests of eastern and southern Africa: the Mountain Buzzard *B. oreophilus* of eastern Africa and the Forest Buzzard endemic to South Africa; although the two are often considered conspecific (Clancey *et al.* 1987; Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994). The restricted distribution of the Forest Buzzard reflects the limited extent of Afromontane forest in the region, along the southern coastal regions and, to the north, inland along the Drakensberg to the northern Transvaal.

It usually occurs singly or in pairs. In the southern Cape Province each pair has a hunting area of *c.* 10 ha (Siegfried 1968a) and two active nests were 'just over a kilometre apart' (Palmer *et al.* 1985). It is easily confused with the Steppe Buzzard *B. buteo vulpinus*, particularly juveniles, and especially as that species occasionally overwinters. All atlas records of Forest Buzzards away from forested areas were carefully examined and invariably rejected. Confusion between the species means that reporting rates are likely to be inflated for the Forest Buzzard within its known range, especially in summer.

Habitat: It breeds in indigenous forests and in plantations of alien trees, mainly pines and eucalypts, normally in close proximity to natural forests. It hunts in ecotonal areas with mosaics of forest, plantation, fynbos, grassland and agricultural land. Not surprisingly, the highest reporting rates

were in Afromontane Forest and its occurrence in the other vegetation types can be ascribed to patches of suitable forest and plantation habitat in these.

Movements: It has been considered to be sedentary (Brown *et al.* 1982; Steyn 1982b; Maclean 1993b), but the absence of confirmed breeding records from the Transvaal, and the concentration there of records during winter, have led to the suggestion that it is largely a nonbreeding migrant to that region (Tarboton & Allan 1984). In addition, recoveries of birds ringed in the Transvaal and KwaZulu-Natal in the southern Cape Province and the absence or paucity of breeding records east of Humansdorp (3424BB) have further indicated that it may be a nonbreeding migrant away from the coastal forests of the southern Cape Province (Allan 1992a), although birds are present in the latter area throughout the year (Boshoff 1991). The models are not helpful in this regard, owing to the unreliability of reporting rates for this species. Reporting rates tend to increase in all Zones during summer, the period when confusion with the Steppe Buzzard is most likely.

Breeding: The atlas data show breeding in spring/summer. The main egg-laying period is August–November, with a September–October peak (Brown *et al.* 1982; Palmer *et al.* 1985). The atlas data also reflect the concentration of breeding records in the southern Cape Province (Zones 4 and 8), with only one record (eggs in October 1989 in grid cell 3030AA) coming from north of this region; this record requires confirmation.

Historical distribution and conservation: The overall range is not considered to have undergone a major change but confusion with the Steppe Buzzard makes assessment of the status of the Forest Buzzard difficult. Distribution and numbers have increased locally owing to the planting of extensive tracts of alien trees. For example, its range has expanded in the southwestern Cape Province, where pre-1980 records are few (Boshoff *et al.* 1983); the atlas data show the species to be widespread in this area now. Similarly, it has expanded its range in the escarpment area of the eastern Transvaal (Tarboton & Allan 1984) and possibly in parts of KwaZulu-Natal. Where it breeds in commercial forestry plantations, trees used for nesting may be harvested (Palmer *et al.* 1985).

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Recorded in 149 grid cells, 3.3%
Total number of records: 1927
Mean reporting rate for range: 8.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



