



African Goshawk

Afrikaanse Sperwer

Accipiter tachiro

This accipiter is found in the eastern and extreme southern parts of South Africa, throughout Swaziland and in most of Zimbabwe, and there are scattered records from the Caprivi Strip and far northern and eastern Botswana. Further north in Africa, the African Goshawk occurs widely in forests and dense woodlands south of the Sahara. In well-vegetated regions it may be the commonest accipiter present, e.g. three different birds displayed simultaneously only 500 m apart in a Transvaal forest (Tarboton & Allan 1984) and one home range in the eastern Cape Province measured 1.8 km² (Vernon 1986b). In the eastern Transvaal lowveld, three nests were 3.3, 3.5 and 3.7 km apart along a dry riverbed (Simmons 1990a).

It is highly secretive but, unlike other accipiters, it frequently reveals its presence through its obvious and prolonged display flights and calls. It can, however, be readily confused with other similarly plumaged birds of prey.

Habitat: Within its distribution it is highly localized in areas of dense vegetation, such as forest, well-developed woodland, riparian growth and thickets, and is rarely recorded away from cover. It exploits stands of alien trees for hunting and nesting.

Movements: It is thought to be sedentary throughout its range (Brown *et al.* 1982). Seasonal variations in reporting rates apparent in the models are probably due to seasonal differences in the intensity of display and vocalizations. Most displaying and calling occurs in the winter through to the early summer (June–October) and it is largely silent and inconspicuous during the late summer (November–February) (Vernon 1986b).

Breeding: Breeding was recorded September–April and appeared to peak earlier (October–November) in the southernmost parts of the range (Zones 4 and 8) compared with more northern regions (November–January). Egg-laying in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981) and the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) largely spanned September–November, with an October peak.

Historical distribution and conservation: Although it will nest in stands of alien trees it has apparently not increased its range in the Transvaal by this means (Tarboton & Allan 1984; Allan & Tarboton 1985). In the southwestern Cape Province, however, its use of alien trees is thought to have led to an increase in numbers and a range extension (Hockey *et al.* 1989). Its largely avian prey renders it vulnerable to contamination by pesticides, but its forest habitat perhaps makes this unlikely. The African Goshawk is not known to have decreased anywhere in southern Africa and is not considered threatened.

D.G. Allan

Recorded in 629 grid cells, 13.9%

Total number of records: 7705

Mean reporting rate for range: 12.3%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



