

# First confirmed record of Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* for Seychelles

Elena Levorato<sup>a</sup>, William McNeely<sup>a</sup>, Jean-Claude Camille<sup>a</sup> and Adrian Skerrett<sup>b</sup>

**Première mention de la Bondrée orientale *Pernis ptilorhynchus* pour les Seychelles.** Fin 2020, une Bondrée orientale *Pernis ptilorhynchus* a été observée à Desroches, la plus grande île Amirante des Seychelles. Le rapace, un mâle de 2<sup>ème</sup> année calendaire, était toujours présent fin décembre 2021. Ceci est la première mention de l'espèce acceptée par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois. Les populations septentrionales de la Bondrée orientale nichent de la Sibérie au Japon et hivernent de l'Asie du sud-est à l'Indonésie et aux Philippines, où elles rencontrent les populations du sud, qui sont majoritairement sédentaires. En Afrique, des occasionnels ont été rapportés de l'Égypte, du Soudan, de Djibouti, du Kenya, du Gabon et de l'Afrique du Sud.

In late 2020 (precise date unrecorded), J-CC, Senior Conservation Ranger on Desroches, observed a large raptor he was unable to identify or photograph. On 26 February 2021, AS received a 13-second video from Island Manager Alan Commetant showing the bird in silhouette. The size and small head suggested a honey buzzard *Pernis* sp., with European Honey Buzzard *P. apivorus*, recorded nine times previously in Seychelles, the most likely species.

On 5 August 2021, EL & WM arrived on the island and observed the bird at many locations, notably perched in trees along the east coast. It was seen multiple times attacking a nesting Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* suggesting it may have resorted to taking adult birds or chicks, presumably in the absence of more typical food. AS observed

the bird on 11 November. It remained present until at least late December 2021.

EL & WM submitted a record form, including a photograph of the bird at rest, to the Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC). Dick Forsman examined the photograph of the perched bird and flight images taken subsequently (Figs. 1–2), and commented 'This is a male Oriental Honey Buzzard *P. ptilorhynchus* based on the tail pattern, with very broad black bands, and the darkish iris, both excluding European Honey Buzzard. The images of the bird in flight show that it is a second-calendar-year male moulting from juvenile to first adult plumage' (Forsman 1994, 2016, Clark & Davies 2018).

Northern populations of Oriental Honey Buzzard breed from central Siberia east to Japan



**Figures 1–2.** Second-calendar-year male Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, Desroches, Seychelles, 9 August 2021 (Elena Levorato)

Bondrée orientale *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, mâle de 2<sup>ème</sup> année calendaire, Desroches, Seychelles, 9 août 2021 (Elena Levorato)

and in September–October migrate to winter from mainland South-East Asia south to Indonesia and the Philippines, where they overlap with the mainly sedentary southern populations (Orta *et al.* 2021). In Africa, vagrants have been reported in Egypt (Baha El Din & Baha El Din 1997), Sudan (T. Jenner *in Bull. ABC* 19: 108), Djibouti (Welch & Welch 2017), Kenya (Kennedy & Marsh 2016; E. Kai & L. Sogot *in Bull. ABC* 28: 255), Gabon (Clark & Christy 2006) and South Africa (T. Hardaker *in Bull. ABC* 28: 265).

The record has been accepted by SBRC as the first confirmed record of Oriental Honey Buzzard for Seychelles. However, two previous records that potentially involved this species have also been accepted: a hybrid *P. apivorus* × *orientalis* or perhaps an Oriental Honey Buzzard race *ruficollis* at Grand Anse, Praslin, on 20 January 2013, and a juvenile at Alphonse, perhaps Oriental (*P. p. ruficollis* or *orientalis*), but the possibility of a hybrid *P. apivorus* × *orientalis* could not be excluded. In addition, four of the nine records of European Honey Buzzard have been accepted with a caveat that Oriental Honey Buzzard could not be eliminated.

### Acknowledgements

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<sup>a</sup> *Island Conservation Society, Desroches Island Conservation Centre, Seychelles. E-mail: desroches@ics.sc*

<sup>b</sup> *PO Box 336, Victoria, Seychelles or Hazeley Brook, Keele Road, Keele, Staffs. ST5 5AL, UK. E-mail: askerrett@hotmail.com*

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