

First record of nominate Common Buzzard *Buteo b. buteo* for Jordan

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This note describes the first confirmed record of an adult nominate Common Buzzard *Buteo b. buteo* for Jordan. It spent an entire winter season at Madaba, 20 km southwest of Amman (31° 41' N, 35° 48' E). The same individual was seen on many occasions mid November 2015–early March 2016 near the Madaba waste water plant. The landscape consisted of a mosaic of irrigated alfalfa fields with lines of trees, rain-fed wheat fields and olive plantations neighbouring the waste water plant. The bird was usually seen soaring above or sitting on a fence some distance away. It was first assumed to be a dark Steppe Buzzard *Buteo b. vulpinus*, which is an abundant passage migrant in Jordan (Andrews 1995) a few individuals of which linger for some time after the autumn migration period. On 15 January 2016 we observed the bird at a closer range and took some photographs (Plates 1, 2).

Description: It generally appeared heavier and slightly bigger than Steppe Buzzard. While soaring, wings looked broad, and the tail noticeably shorter than the width of the wing. Plumage was generally dark brown but with a distinctive pale band at lower breast, and with pale feathers running down the centre of breast and belly, and a pale mid-wing band on lower wing (Plates 1,2). Lower belly to vent and parts of trousers were also pale (whitish with very few bars). These features are typical of Common Buzzard *Buteo b. buteo* and not found in the dark morphs of Long-legged Buzzard *B. rufinus* or Steppe Buzzard. The upper side of body and wings while soaring was generally dark brown (featureless, bases of primaries were dark on the upper side of wing unlike Long-legged Buzzard's, and the upper side of the tail was dark brown except for pale bases of the two central tail feathers. It was aged as an adult due to the dark iris, contrasting, fairly broad dark trailing edge of the wing and the predominance of cross-bars rather than streaks on the underparts.

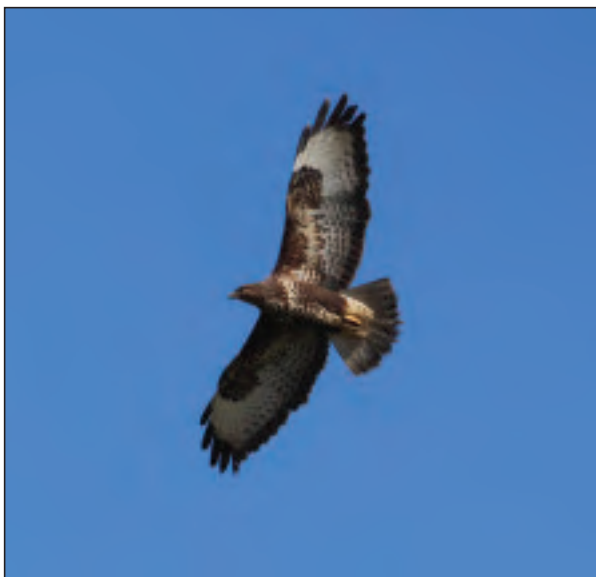


Plate 1. (left) Nominat Common Buzzard *Buteo b. buteo* Madaba, Jordan, 15 January 2016. © Roberto Massis

Plate 2. (right) Nominat Common Buzzard *Buteo b. buteo* Madaba, Jordan, 15 January 2016. © Fares Khoury

This record, accepted by the Jordanian bird rarities committee, is not unexpected because Common Buzzard *Buteo b. buteo* is a regular and not uncommon winter visitor to the northern and western parts of the Middle East including Israel (Snow & Perrins 1998). It is a common winter visitor to the northern Jordan valley as observed on the Israeli side of the border (Shirihai 1996). A buzzard with similar features was observed at Ghor Rama in the Jordanian Jordan valley in January 2016, but it was soaring too high for confident identification. The taxon has apparently been overlooked in Jordan, where it is likely to be a regular winter visitor in the northwest.

LITERATURE CITED

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