

Honey Buzzard

Wespedief

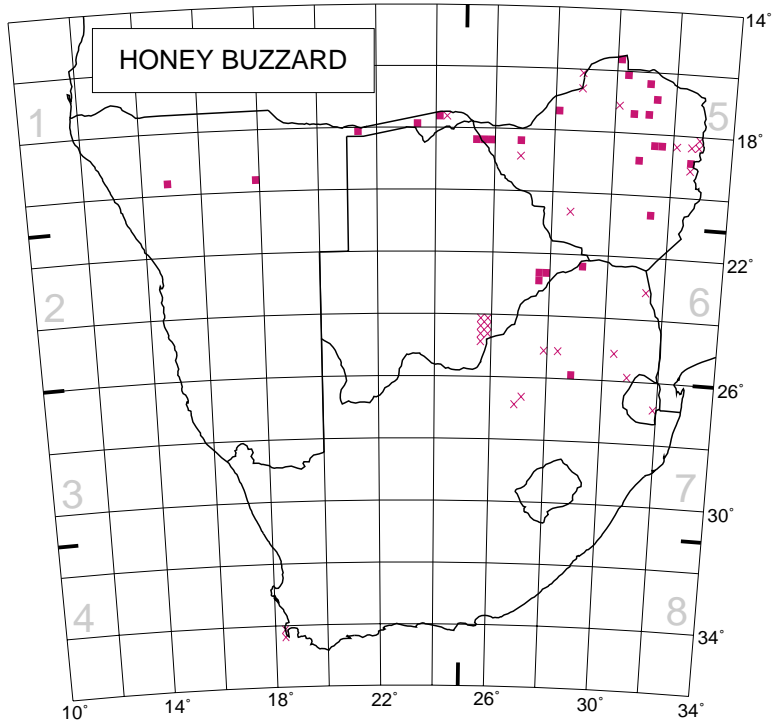
Pernis apivorus

This Palearctic migrant occupies a breeding range in Europe and western Asia, and it forms a superspecies with the Crested Honey Buzzard *P. ptilorhynchus* of eastern Asia (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994). In southern Africa it occurs sparsely in the woodlands of the northeast, with scattered records from the moister woodlands in northern and eastern Botswana, and Namibia. It has regularly been seen in the southwestern Cape Province in the Tokai (3418AB) and Stellenbosch (3318DD) areas near Cape Town (Boshoff *et al.* 1983; Hockey *et al.* 1989, 1992; Pepler & Martin 1995), but only some of these records were submitted to the atlas.

This unobtrusive species is often overlooked. Large numbers are seen crossing the Mediterranean Sea every year, but sightings anywhere in Africa are relatively infrequent (Steyn 1982b). It has variable plumage which may have caused atlasers to confuse it with other species, e.g. the Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo*. However, its general appearance and habits are diagnostic.

It is mostly insectivorous and hunts in trees and on the ground for wasp nests which it breaks open to feed on larvae and pupae (Steyn 1982b). Limited observations suggest that in southern Africa it may aggregate at localities where paper wasps *Belanogaster* spp. are particularly abundant (e.g. Allan 1986; Cassidy & Pretorius 1991).

The Honey Buzzard migrates from its breeding grounds to Africa in August–September and returns April–June (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994). It is known to arrive in southern Africa in late November and most have departed again by late May (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).



Recorded in 53 grid cells, 1.2%
 Total number of records: 71
 Mean reporting rate for range: 1.3%

A.R. Jenkins

