

## **A Record of a Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) Nesting in an Abandoned Building**

Author(s) :Carlos Castillo-Góómez and Gregorio Moreno-Rueda

Source: Journal of Raptor Research, 45(3):275-277. 2011.

Published By: The Raptor Research Foundation

DOI: 10.3356/JRR-10-114.1

URL: <http://www.bioone.org/doi/full/10.3356/JRR-10-114.1>

---

BioOne ([www.bioone.org](http://www.bioone.org)) is a nonprofit, online aggregation of core research in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences. BioOne provides a sustainable online platform for over 170 journals and books published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Web site, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at [www.bioone.org/page/terms\\_of\\_use](http://www.bioone.org/page/terms_of_use).

Usage of BioOne content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non-commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

A RECORD OF A COMMON BUZZARD (*BUTEO BUTEO*) NESTING IN AN ABANDONED BUILDINGKEY WORDS: *Common Buzzard*; *Buteo buteo*; *breeding*; *human*; *nest*; *nesting site*.

Most birds build nests, structures serving a thermoregulatory function for the eggs and later the brood, which are fundamental to successful bird reproduction (Hansell 2000). Thus, the choice of an appropriate nesting site helps to create an optimized microclimate inside the nest (Ontiveros et al. 2008). However, as nests are static structures where the brood and the eggs have little chance of escaping predators, the nest site ideally should minimize the risk of attack by predators (Cresswell 1997). The preferred nesting site often varies according to the environmental conditions, and so species may modify their choice of nesting sites depending on the natural environment which they inhabit. If a bird does not find appropriate nesting sites in a specific area, it may choose a suboptimal site (Monrós et al. 1999).

There are many cases in which raptors nest in atypical sites (Ellis et al. 2009). For example, the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and the Bonelli's Eagle (*A. fasciatus*) generally nest on cliffs, but sometimes nest in trees (Real 2004, Arroyo 2004). The Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) normally breeds in rocky areas, but when these sites are scarce, it may usurp corvid nests (Balfour 1955). These behaviors may occur when birds find good feeding conditions in the area or other factors that might induce their settlement, even if nesting sites are not ideal (Ellis et al. 2009). These phenomena happen naturally in the wild, although they are rare. However, humans can also prompt birds to nest in unusual sites by building structures that many types of birds, including raptors, eventually use for nesting. Some species may even become dependent on these artificial sites. Among raptors, the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) is a good example of a species that adapts easily to human structures for nests. In Michigan (U.S.A.), only 10% of Osprey nests were located on a natural structure. Osprey nests have been found made on a grounded boat's mast and on a car mounted on a pole (Ellis et al. 2009). Similarly, Lesser Kestrels (*Falco naumanni*) historically used cliffs for their nesting colonies, but for decades, in Spain, have nested almost exclusively on human-made buildings, such as cathedrals, houses, or towers (González and Merino 1990). The Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) usually nests on cliffs, but is frequently found nesting on high buildings in large cities (Cade et al. 1996).

We here describe an unconventional case of nesting in a human-made building by a pair of Common Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*). Buzzards are sedentary, medium-sized raptors that are abundant on the Iberian Peninsula (Díaz et al. 1996, Balbás 2003, Tapia 2010). They usually nest in trees, particularly deciduous ones, surrounded by

open fields where they hunt (Grande and Hiraldo 1987, Cerasoli and Penteriani 1996, Tapia 2010). However, they sometimes nest on cliffs (Quilis et al. 1993, Rodríguez et al. 2010). The elusive behavior of this species causes them to avoid proximity to humans, whose presence negatively affects them (Palomino and Carrascal 2007), making it extremely rare to find a buzzard's nest on a human-made building. In May 2009, we found a buzzard's nest on the only remaining wall of an old, semi-collapsed country house (Fig. 1), in the vicinity of Mengíbar (southeastern Spain). The nest was located about 3 m aboveground, lower than their conventional nests in trees (which are located between 6 and 25 m aboveground; Zuberogioitia et al. 2006), and on cliffs, where Rodríguez et al. (2010) reported heights of 6–175 m (average 67 m), although Palacios Palomar (2005) reported cliff-nest heights of 1–12 m. The abandoned country house was located in a farming area, where human presence is common, making this nesting site particularly atypical for Common Buzzards. Moreover, the nest was 550 m from a busy road and 490 m from Geolit, one of the largest science and technology parks in southern Spain, a site with constant human activity. The nest was made mainly of sprigs of fresh vegetation and twigs, which resulted in a loose structure. It was occupied by three buzzard nestlings, which developed normally and fledged successfully. In February 2010, the wall where the nest was located was demolished, precluding future re-nesting.

That the Common Buzzard chose this site for its nesting was exceptional. After research and consultation with experts on this species, we found no previous record of such a nesting site for the Common Buzzard. The nest lacked protection from weather or predators. We speculated that two factors may help explain why this pair of buzzards chose this place for nesting. First, the field in which the nest was located apparently had an abundance of rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), based on the number of burrows we observed, and the rabbit is one of the main prey items of this species during the breeding season (Mañosa and Cordero 1992). Second, the active agricultural fields were flat, with no natural alternatives (trees or cliffs) where birds could nest. Thus, the wall of the old country house was the only potential nesting site near the fields rich in prey.

This article would not have been possible without the help of Liborio Sánchez Rodríguez, who reported on the nest's existence, and Francisco Serrano Gómez, who taught us about the environment in which this atypical nesting took place. Rafael Barrientos, David Ellis, and Vincenzo Penteriani provided valuable information on unusual nest sites.



Figure 1. Nest of Common Buzzard on an old country-house wall, near Mengibar, Spain, 2009. Note remains of rabbit near the smallest nestling.

Beatriz Hernández-Moreno helped in the translation, and David Nesbitt carefully checked the manuscript and improved the English. Comments by Sean Walls and Graham Austin improved the manuscript. We would like to thank them all sincerely, and we also thank all the landowners and neighbors who allowed the nestlings to grow and fledge successfully.—**Carlos Castillo-Gómez** (e-mail address: [charly.signatus@gmail.com](mailto:charly.signatus@gmail.com)), Departamento de Biología Animal, Universidad de Granada, ES-18071, Granada, Spain; and **Gregorio Moreno-Rueda**, Estación Experimental de Zonas Áridas (CSIC), La Cañada de San Urbano, Ctra. Sacramento s/n, ES-04120, Almería, Spain.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- ARROYO, B. 2004. Águila real (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Pages 151–153 in A. Madroño, C. González, and J.C. Atienza [Eds.], Libro rojo de las aves de España. Dirección General para la Biodiversidad-SEO/BirdLife, Madrid, Spain.
- BALBÁS, R. 2003. Busardo ratonero (*Buteo buteo*). Pages 184–185 in R. Martí and J.C. del Moral [Eds.], Atlas de las aves reproductoras de España. Dirección General de Conservación de la Naturaleza-Sociedad Española de Ornitología, Madrid, Spain.
- BALFOUR, E. 1955. Kestrel nesting on the ground in Orkney. *Bird Notes* 26:245–253.
- CADE, T.J., M. MARTELL, P. REDIG, G. SEPTON, AND H. TORDOFF. 1996. Peregrine Falcons in urban North America. Pages 3–13 in D.M. Bird, D.E. Varland, and J.J. Negro [Eds.], Raptors in human landscapes. Academic Press, London, U.K.
- CERASOLI, M. AND V. PENTERIANI. 1996. Nest-site and aerial meeting point selection by Common Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*) in central Italy. *Journal of Raptor Research* 30:130–135.
- CRESSWELL, W. 1997. Nest predation: the relative effects of nest characteristics, clutch size and parental behaviour. *Animal Behaviour* 53:93–103.
- DÍAZ, M., B. ASENSIO, AND J.L. TELLERÍA. 1996. Aves Ibéricas I, no Paseriformes. Reyero, Madrid, Spain.

- ELLIS, D.H., T. CRAIG, E. CRAIG, S. POSTUPALSKY, C.T. LARUE, R.W. NELSON, D.W. ANDERSON, C.J. HENNY, J. WATSON, B.A. MILLSAP, J.W. DAWSON, K.L. COLE, E.M. MARTIN, A. MARGALIDA, AND P. KUNG. 2009. Unusual raptor nests around the world. *Journal of Raptor Research* 43:175–198.
- GONZÁLEZ, J.L. AND M. MERINO. 1990. El cernícalo primilla (*Falco naumanni*) en la Península Ibérica: situación, problemática y aspectos biológicos. ICONA, Madrid, Spain.
- GRANDE, J.L.G. AND F. HIRALDO. 1987. Las rapaces Ibéricas. Centro de Fotografía de la Naturaleza, Madrid, Spain.
- HANSELL, M. 2000. Bird nests and construction behaviour. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, U.K.
- MAÑOSA, S. AND P.J. CORDERO. 1992. Seasonal and sexual variation in the diet of the Common Buzzard in north-eastern Spain. *Journal of Raptor Research* 26:235–238.
- MONRÓS, J.S., J. GÓMEZ, S.I. ENCAHO, S. BRADT, E. BARBA, AND J.A. GIL-DELGADO. 1999. Cría del carbonero común *Parus major* en nidos abiertos. *Ardeola* 46:89–91.
- ONTIVEROS, D., J. CARO, AND J.M. PLEGUEZUELOS. 2008. Possible functions of alternative nests in raptors: the case of Bonelli's Eagle. *Journal of Ornithology* 149:253–259.
- PALACIOS PALOMAR, C.J. 2005. El ratonero común (*Buteo buteo insularum*) en Fuerteventura, islas Canarias (Aves, Accipitridae). *Vieraea* 33:1–10.
- PALOMINO, D. AND L.M. CARRASCAL. 2007. Habitat associations of a raptor community in a mosaic landscape of central Spain under urban development. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 83:268–274.
- QUILIS, V., G. DELGADO, J. CARILLO, M. NOGALES, AND O. TRUJILLO. 1993. Status y distribución del ratonero común (*Buteo buteo*) y el gavilán (*Accipiter nisus*) en las Islas Canarias. *Vieraea* 22:89–96.
- REAL, J. 2004. Águila-azor perdicera (*Hieraetus fasciatus*). Pages 154–157 in A. Madroño, C. González, and J.C. Atienza [EDS.], Libro rojo de las aves de España. Dirección General para la Biodiversidad-SEO/BirdLife, Madrid, Spain.
- RODRÍGUEZ, B., F. SIVERIO, A. RODRÍGUEZ, J. SIVERIO, J.J. HERNÁNDEZ, AND J. FIGUEROLA. 2010. Density, habitat selection and breeding biology of Common Buzzard in an insular environment. *Bird Study* 57:75–83.
- TAPIA, L. 2010. Busardo ratonero (*Buteo buteo*). In A. Salvador and L.M. Bautista [EDS.], Enciclopedia virtual de los vertebrados Españoles. Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid, Spain, <http://www.vertebradosibericos.org> (last accessed 15 February 2010).
- ZUBEROGOITIA, I., J.E. MARTÍNEZ, J.A. MARTÍNEZ, J. ZABALA, J.F. CALVO, I. CASTILLO, A. AZKONA, A. IRATE, AND S. HIDALGO. 2006. Influence of management practices on nest site habitat selection, breeding and diet of the Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*). *Ardeola* 53:83–98.

Received 23 December 2010; accepted 10 May 2011  
Associate Editor: Sean S. Walls