

NOTES

Madagascar Buzzard (*Buteo brachypterus*) nest in association with the colonial-nesting Sakalava Weaver (*Ploceus sakalava*)

Lily-Arison René de Roland

The Peregrine Fund, BP 4113,
Antananarivo 101, Madagascar
E-mail: lilyarison@yahoo.fr

Résumé

Le 31 octobre 2009, un nid de *Buteo brachypterus* avec deux poussins, âgés de 10 jours, a été trouvé près de la route reliant Antsohihy et Befandriana-Nord, dans la région de Sofia. Ce nid qui est placé entre trois fourches d'un arbre est aussi supporté par une colonie des nids de petit tisserin, *Ploceus sakalava*. Aucune prédation par le rapace envers les passereaux n'a été observée.

Introduction

The Madagascar Buzzard (*Buteo brachypterus*) is an endemic raptor and common across Madagascar, except in the Central Highlands (Langrand, 1990). This raptor occurs in a variety of habitats from human-degraded wooded areas to intact forests. It ranges

from sea level to 2000 m, but it is more common below 1000 m. Little data exists on the biology of this species, except a study conducted during the breeding period in lowland rainforests of Masoala Peninsula, in the northeast from 1991-1992 (Berkelman, 1995, 1996). Berkelman (1996) followed 10 nests during two nesting seasons from September to January, and all nests were placed in trees averaging 18.7 m above the ground, built of sticks placed on an average of 3.2 supporting branches, and nests were lined with green leaves.

On 31 October 2009, a Madagascar Buzzard nest was located 75 m from the national road between Antsohihy and Befandriana-Nord in the Sofia Region of north-central Madagascar. The nest was built in an isolated tree surrounded by degraded forested habitat and about 150 m from a small forest fragment. The nest contained two white nestlings estimated at 10 days of age based on their size. The nest was supported by three small branches and associated with approximately 75 nests of a Sakalava Weaver (*Ploceus sakalava*) colony (Figure 1). This pair of Madagascar Buzzard collected small branches and



Figure 1: Madagascar Buzzard nest

built their nest above the weaver colony, which was also in active breeding.

That same day I observed the raptor nest for 4 h (7-11 am), and no aggressive interaction was observed between the weavers and adult raptors. The adult buzzard attending the nest was a female, which left the nest on occasion and moved to other trees within a distance of about 150 m, presumably waiting for the male to deliver prey. This behavior is normal for raptors when the male is absent during a long period looking for food; the same behavior has been observed for the Henst Goshawk (*Accipiter henstii*) and Madagascar Harrier-hawk (*Polyboroides radiatus*) (Rene de Roland, 2000).

The case reported herein appears to be the first example of the Madagascar Buzzard building a nest in association with a colony of passerines. For other members of the genus *Buteo*, there are parallel observations. For example, a significant portion of the nests of Ridgway's Hawk (*B. ridgwayi*) in the Dominican Republic are associated with colonies of the Palmchat (*Dulus dominicus*) (Thorstrom *et al.*, 2005, 2007). The Palmchat nests provide an excellent substrate to support the raptor's nest in open areas and pastures where the only trees of importance are royal palms (*Roystonea borinquena*).

Given that this observation was made during the nestling period, when the nutritional demand for food is high, it is noteworthy that no clear aggressive or predatory evidence was observed between the Madagascar Buzzards and Sakalava Weavers. Considering the placement of the Madagascar Buzzard's nest reported on herein, it may be that suitable nest sites are lacking in this area due to local habitat degradation with virtually all large mature trees having been removed, which includes the nearby Bora Special Reserve. The degradation of habitat in this reserve may have forced local raptors to seek nest

sites in nearby areas. Hence, the unusual placement of the Madagascar Buzzard nest maybe an adaptation for a suitable nesting site. It would be interesting to know if this was a unique incident or if it occurs with some regularity in other areas in Madagascar lacking extensive nesting habitat.

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Petits mammifères (Afrosoricida et Rodentia) nouvellement recensés dans le Parc National d'Andohahela (parcelle 1), Madagascar

Landryh Tojomanana Ramanana

Département de Biologie Animale, Faculté des Sciences, Université d'Antananarivo, BP 906, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar et Vahatra, BP 3972, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar
E-mail : ramananatojo@yahoo.fr

Résumé

Des inventaires biologiques ont été effectués dans la forêt humide du Parc National d'Andohahela (parcelle 1) entre octobre et décembre 2009. Cinq sites d'étude axés sur un transect altitudinal compris entre 440 à 1875 m d'altitude ont été inventoriés,