

Dear Prasad

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to comment on this interesting bird.

Structurally I think the bird is close to Crested Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* with its 6 protruding primary tips (P10-P5), its large head, particularly at the rear, and its strong legs and feet. I think these structural features are so clear-cut for Crested Honey-buzzard that the bird cannot be a pure European Honey-buzzard *P. apivorus* as we know it in Western Europe.

The rufous phase does occur regularly in juvenile *apivorus* but is commoner in *ptilorhynchus*, it appears; the dark-phase is the commonest form of *apivorus* juvenile. So on this feature Crested Honey-buzzard is also favoured statistically.

The tail length measured at 24cm appears to be close to the wing-width, maybe slightly longer. In August/September juvenile *apivorus* have shorter tails than this as they are still growing but by November the tails should be as in adults, that is the same length as in your bird. I suspect the tail of *apivorus* looks slightly longer than that for *ptilorhynchus* as it is slightly narrower. I agree that your bird does indeed appear to have a relatively narrow long tail, hence favouring *apivorus* to some extent in this respect.

The challenging point for identification is that the carpal patches on your bird are dark on both wings, which is a diagnostic feature of *apivorus*.

I'm not sure how diagnostic gorget colouration is for distinguishing between the two species. This bird shows a pale gorget with malar stripes on the sides of the throat, which is certainly good for *ptilorhynchus* but it's also good for paler *apivorus*, including rufous forms. So such a feature is consistent with both *ptilorhynchus* and pale/rufous *apivorus*.

I note the bird was picked up at sea, which suggests it was migrating, presumably from West Siberia, which would be N of the west coast of India. This area is relatively close to the range of *apivorus*. There is likely to be a zone where the two species meet, giving rise to the possibility of hybrids.

IMHO the bird is consistent with *ptilorhynchus*, except for the dark carpal patches and the relatively long, narrow tail, which favour *apivorus*. I'm not sure how much work has been done in the area in Siberia where the ranges of *apivorus* and *ptilorhynchus* meet. Your bird could be a hybrid from this area.

I hope you have got further interesting views and please let me know what is eventually decided.

Best wishes ... Nick Rossiter

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Respected Sir,

Hello. I am a birdwatcher based in Gujarat, India and obtained your email from your detailed website on European Honey Buzzard.

We have a problem with a very interesting honey-buzzard, which was found off the Gujarat coast (about 10 kms from Porbandar) in the sea and rescued by a fisherman. This was on 24 November 2019. The bird is still alive and being cared for. The bird is injured.

Initially identified as a Crested Honey Buzzard (the common species here), there has been some speculation if this could be a European Honey Buzzard or a hybrid. The dark carpal patches, long tail and lack of gorget is similar to European while the six 'fingers' are like Crested. So question of whether it could be a hybrid have also been raised.

We measured the bird and the details are given in the attached word file. Our problem is that the measurements fall within range for both species.

European Honey Buzzard has not been noted in India. We have taken some feathers for DNA analysis (if required). We have taken opinions from Andrea Corso and Wouter Faveyts, who think it is ok for a European Honey Buzzard. We have sent the photos and measurements to Dick Forsman and are awaiting his reply.

If you can take a look at the photos / measurements can provide an opinion, it will be of great help in deciding this.

Your help is very much appreciated.

Thanking you,

With Best Regards,

Prasad