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Dedicated to Mrs. W.S.S. van Benthem Jutting

A note on Himalayan Buzzards, *Buteo buteo* (Aves)

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VAURIE (1961) in a recent review of the geographical races of the Common, or Eurasian, Buzzard (*Buteo buteo* (Linnaeus)) has found no evidence in favour of the recognition of a West Chinese or Tibetan mountain race of that species. Even less he considers it likely that the Buzzard nests in mountain forests in the Himalayas. In his conclusion he is at variance with PORTENKO (1929 : 644) who described a special race from the Cham region in East Tibet and mentioned specimens ascribed to this race from West China, Darjeeling, Sikkim, and the northwestern Himalaya. This race, originally described as *Buteo japonicus saturatus*, was re-named by PORTENKO in 1935 *Buteo japonicus refectus* on nomenclatorial reasons (Orn. Monatsb., 43 : 152). It was considered by HARTERT & STEINBACHER (1932—38) as a synonym of *Buteo buteo burmanicus* Hume and by VAURIE (1961) as a synonym of *Buteo buteo japonicus* Temminck & Schlegel. Neither the question of the occurrence of Buzzards as breeding birds in the Sino-Himalayan mountains, nor the nomenclature of Buzzards actually collected in these regions has at present been solved. Still, the Buzzard is mentioned to breed in Tibet and Ladakh by both RIPLEY (1961) and ALI (1962) under the name of *burmanicus*, but not in Sikkim (ALI, 1962).

For zoogeographical reasons the occurrence of a Sino-Himalayan race of Common Buzzard would be most interesting since these mountain populations would enclose a Central Asiatic group of buzzards living in semi-deserts and cold steppes (*B. rufinus* and *B. hemilasius*). These Central Asiatic high plateau buzzards occur south of the forest-inhabiting Common Buzzards from Siberia and are sometimes considered as conspecific, or almost so, with the whole group of Buzzards of the species *Buteo buteo*. The breeding range and the characters of the mountain buzzards therefore have those noteworthy zoogeographical complications in that they would indicate an additional ecological basis for the subspecies formation in this group of raptors.

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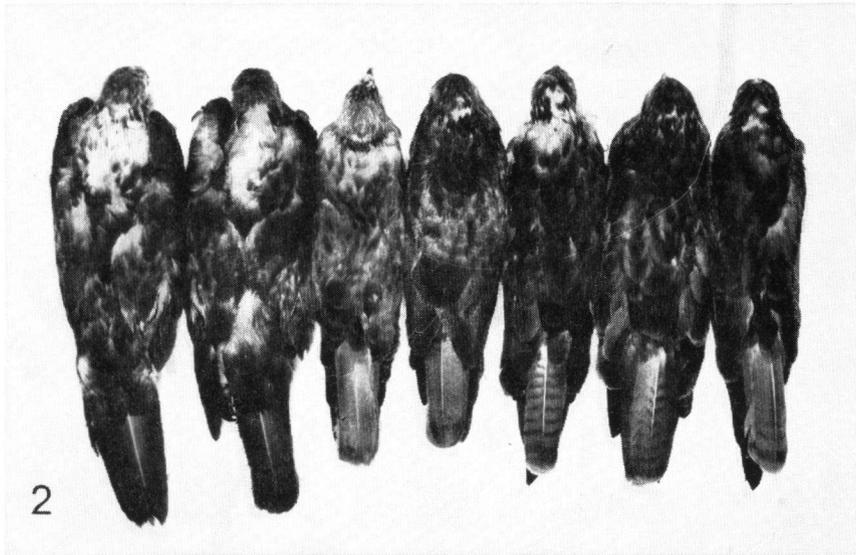
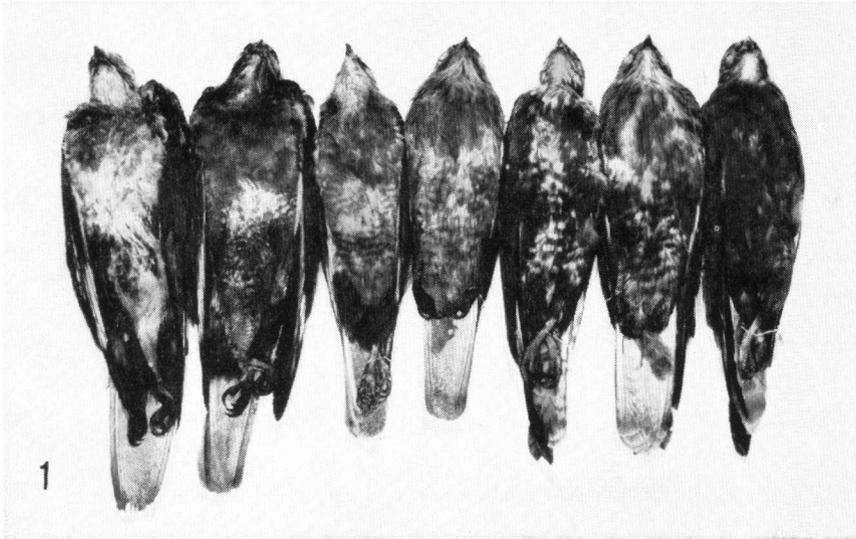


FIGURE 1. Himalayan and Caucasian Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*); adult definite plumage Under parts. From left to right:

China Kanda, N.W. Himalaya (♀ ZMA 2299).

China Kanda, N.W. Himalaya (♂ ZMA 2298).

Georgia, 2 July 1909 (♂ Moscow 41853).

Krasnodar Territory, 15 May 1914 (♂ Moscow 67300).

Krasnodar Territory, 24 August 1926 (♀ Moscow 6582).

Krasnodar Territory, 30 August 1914 (♀ Moscow 40998).

Krasnodar Territory, 31 August 1926 (Moscow 6581).

FIGURE 2. Himalayan and Caucasian Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*); adult definite plumage Upper parts. Explanation, see figure 1.

In the present paper the study-skins of two Buzzards from the northwestern Himalayas will be described and an attempt will be made to give these birds their appropriate names.

MATERIAL

Reg. nrs. 2298 and 2299. ♂ and ♀. Chini Kanda, Sutlej Valley, 12,000 ft., Northwest Himalaya. Collected by Dr. W. G. N. van der Sleen, about 7 July 1925.

These birds probably formed a breeding pair.

For habitat and specimens, see figs. 1—4.

Nr. 2298. ♂. A tawny brown buzzard in fully adult plumage with uniform brown breast, and broadly brown-and-buff barred abdomen, separated by a narrow white patch. Tibial feathers uniform dark reddish brown. Tail feathers dull brown with some dark barring. Under tail coverts white with rufous transverse bars. Upper tail coverts dark earthen brown. Head brown; a dark streak running from the base of the lower mandible and a black line over the eye are conspicuous. Upper parts dark earthen brown without rufous feather edges. Most of the inner webs of the primaries are white, forming a large white patch on the wing when viewed from below, sharply bordered by the black of the wing tip. Notch on outer web of 4th primary (from outside) does not reach in line with the top of the 10th primary. The bird is renewing the 7th primary of the right wing and one of its tail feathers. The remaining primaries and tail feathers seem to be old and are partly faded but are not considerably worn. The un-feathered, distal part of the tarsus is 57% of the whole tarsus length. For measurements see table 1.

TABLE 1. Measurements of adult Himalayan and Caucasian *Buteo buteo*.

Number	Locality	Race	Sex	Wing	Tail	Bill	Tarsus	Tarsus: un-feathered distal part
ZMA 2298	N.W. Himalaya	<i>refectus</i>	♂	392	215	20½	75	43
ZMA 2299	N.W. Himalaya	<i>refectus</i>	♀	407	218	23	76½	45
Chicago 217884	Nepal	<i>refectus</i>	♀	416	220	23½	86	—
Chicago 250403	Nepal	<i>japonicus</i>	♀	386	209	21½	75	—
Moscow 41853	Georgia	<i>menetriesi</i>	♀	365	187	23	71½	46
Moscow 6582	Krasnodar	<i>menetriesi</i>	♀	406	212	23½	75	55
Moscow 40998	Krasnodar	<i>menetriesi</i>	♀	401	219	23	75	46

This specimen agrees more or less with the description of the saturated colour phase of Portenko's forma *fulvipectus* to which the type specimen of his race *saturatus* is referred (PORTENKO 1929 : 645).

Nr. 2299. ♀. Considerably lighter underneath, with more white on the breast and less distinct barring. Still, it does not show longitudinal streaks to a noteworthy extent. There are patches of rufous on the breast and of rufous brown on the flanks. Tibial feathers darker, more chocolate brown. Tail feathers uniform sandy brown, somewhat lighter and buffish along the shafts. The tail feathers are old, worn, and faded; the 3rd pair (counted from out-

side) are almost wholly renewed: they are of virtually the same greyish brown coloration as the old feathers, but are somewhat lighter and more buffish along the shafts. Colour of upper parts, white on underside of primaries, and the position of the notch on the outer web of the 4th primary are as in the previous specimen. The whole plumage is old and somewhat faded, but not particularly worn. The un-feathered distal part of the tarsus is 59% of the whole tarsus length. For measurements, see table 1.

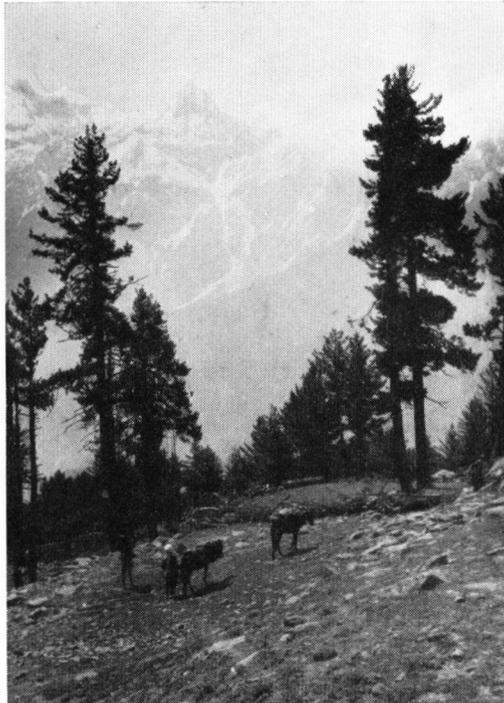
DISCUSSION

Few buzzards are known to have been collected in the Sino-Himalayan mountains in the breeding time. In fact any specimen from this region is rare and those known have been listed by VAURIE (1961 : 7). Two specimens from Sikkim (March and April, 1893 at 12,600 ft.) examined by VAURIE were considered by him as possibly local birds: "one is in the black phase, and the other is identical with specimens from Japan" (p. 7—8). The only specimen recorded from the breeding time is one collected by Ludlow at Bimbi La, eastern Himalayas, at 12,000 ft., on 6 June 1936 (Ibis, 1944 : 374). We have not seen this specimen.

Instead, we have examined two specimens, kindly sent on loan from the Chicago Natural History Museum by Mr. Melvin A Traylor. We are thankful to Dr. Rand and Mr. Traylor for their kind assistance.

Chicago N.H. Mus. 217884. ♀. Emelie, Kanchanpur, West Nepal, 900 ft. Collected by Robert L. Fleming on 6 January 1953. This specimen exactly matches the adult male from Chini Kanda in the Amsterdam Museum. It is slightly more rufous above and below and has somewhat more dark bars on the tail feathers. FLEMING & TRAYLOR (1961) remark about this specimen which they list as *Buteo buteo vulpinus*: "Although in wing length (413) it is larger than the maximum (386) given for females of *vulpinus* by DEMENTIEV and GLADKOV (1951, 1 : 303), it is such a bright rufous below and has such bright rufous edgings above that it cannot possibly be *burmanicus*. In size and colour it agrees with *menetriesi* of Northern Iran and the Caucasus, but that form is not known to be migratory" (p. 461—462). For measurements, see table 1.

Through the kindness of Mrs. A. M. Sudilovskaja from the Zoological Museum of the University of Moscow, we have been able to examine nine specimens of Buzzards considered by the ornithologists of the Moscow Museum to be *Buteo buteo menetriesi* Bogdanov. These Caucassian Buzzards are stated to be larger and darker and more richly rufous above and below than *B. b. vulpinus*; in addition they are claimed to be stationary, whereas *vulpinus* is a long-distance migrant. None of the specimens of *menetriesi* examined, originating from the Krasnodar Territory in the west, to Ordgonikidse in the North Ossetian A.S.S.R., resembles our Himalayan specimens. They are richly rufous, both above and below, have bright rufous tail feathers



FIGS. 3—4. Camp Chini Kanda in the western Himalayas at ca. 3600 m altitude, the habitat of *Buteo buteo refectus*. Photographs by Dr. W. G. N. van der Sleen, July 1925.

and in addition have the emargination on the outer web of the 4th primary falling between the tips of the 7th and 8th or between the 8th and 9th primaries. The un-feathered part of the tarsus in nine specimens is at the average 66% of the whole tarsus length. For measurements, see table 1.

Chicago N.H. Mus. 250403. ♀. Kathmandu Valley, Central Nepal, 3,000 ft. Collected by Robert L. Fleming on 30 January 1957. This specimen has white under parts with brown streaks and a mainly greyish brown, dark-banded tail. It agrees with specimens examined from Japan and lowland China and seems best referable to the race *japonicus* on its winter grounds. It was accordingly listed by FLEMING & TRAYLOR (1961 : 462) as *Buteo buteo burmanicus*. For measurements, see table 1.

CONCLUSION

In view of the specimens collected by Van der Sleen in the north-western Himalayas in the breeding time and the resemblance of at least one of these birds to a specimen from western Nepal collected at a similar altitude of 12,000 ft., positive evidence for the acceptance of a local, dark coloured Himalayan mountain race of the Common Buzzard is available. It is not clear, whether the subspecific name *saturatus sive refectus* Portenko, 1935, is applicable to these birds, but it seems most likely. The name *burmanicus* Hume (1875-Upper Pegu, Burma) probably refers to wintering specimens of the northern *japonicus* from which our Himalayan specimens differ conspicuously. It is unknown whether *refectus* and *japonicus* are geographically separated, nor how close the relationship of these forms is. The same applies to *refectus* and *vulpinus*, but in coloration *refectus* is considerably closer to *vulpinus* or *menetriesi* than to *japonicus*. Still our Himalayan Buzzards were somewhat different in coloration and structure of the wing from specimens of the Caucasian and North Persian race *menetriesi* examined. The latter race, whether sufficiently distinct from *vulpinus* or not, is considered by Russian ornithologists to represent a large, strongly pigmented, resident form of the group of *B. b. vulpinus*. The Himalayan Buzzards on the other hand have sharply pointed wings and are in plumage characters and size in between the mainly forest-inhabiting temperate and boreal Common Buzzards of the *vulpinus* type and the Long-Legged Buzzards (*B. rufinus*) from the semi-deserts of Central Asia. Particularly the saturated pigmentation, the extensively white subterminal patch on the underside of the wing and the broad, slightly banded or wholly uniform tail feathers are reminiscent of *rufinus*. In addition, the presence of *B. buteo japonicus* in the lower Himalayan range in winter, pointed out by VAURIE (1961), is confirmed.

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