

10 Beautiful Birds of Prey Sighted in Uganda

EVENTS

Yvonne de Jong and Thomas Butynski are exploring northern Uganda to study primates, but that’s not all they’ve discovered. See what they found when they lifted their eyes to the skies. Beaudouin’s Snake-eagle During our survey of primates in February 2015, we were also on the look-out for raptors, as that is the time of year when many migrant...

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Beaudouin's Snake-eagle

During our survey of primates in February 2015, we were also on the look-out for raptors, as that is the time of year when many migrant species are wintering in East Africa.



The “Vulnerable” Beaudouin's snake-eagle (*Circaetus beaudouini*) shown here near Kilak, north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong and Tom Butynski)

At a bushfire near Kilak (about half way between Murchison Falls and Nimule National Parks) we encountered a large greyish-brown snake-eagle that we couldn't identify. Neither of us had seen this eagle before.

Later, with bird books at hand, we determined that this mystery bird was a Beaudouin's snake-eagle (*Circaetus beaudouini*). This large raptor is endemic to the Sahel region between the desert and savanna, and is rare in Uganda—there are no documented records for elsewhere in East Africa. As best as we can determine, ours is only the second photographic record of this species for Uganda ([see the previous one here](#)).

With a wingspan of about 5.5 feet (170 cm), the Beaudouin's snake-eagle preys on small vertebrates (including snakes) in savanna, woodland, grassland, and cultivated areas.

Little studied, this eagle is uncommon throughout its geographic range from West Africa eastwards through South Sudan. Birdlife International estimates the global population at fewer than 10,000 individuals.

If you have photographed Beaudouin's snake-eagle in East Africa, please let us know at: yvonne@wildsolutions.nl. We will then put you into contact with several raptor conservationists in East Africa.

Red-necked Buzzard

Gliding over the wooded hills of the Otzi East Central Forest Reserve, just west of the White Nile, a red-necked buzzard gave us only a brief look.



An adult red-necked buzzard (*Buteo auguralis*) soars in Otzi East Central Forest Reserve, north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong and Tom Butynski)

This medium-sized migrant occasionally visits northwest Uganda from December to March but is otherwise not known for East Africa. Red-necked buzzards have a wide geographical range (from Mauritania south to Angola, and east into central Ethiopia and northwest Uganda). This buzzard prefers forest edge, secondary forest, woodland, and cultivation. Food consists of small mammals, birds, and reptiles.

The red-necked buzzard is categorized as being of “Least Concern” on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as this species is relatively common in western Africa. In fact, populations appear to be increasing as degradation is making some habitats more suitable to them.

Other Raptors

Below are photographs of eight other species of raptor that we encountered during our February 2015 survey in northern Uganda. Raptors were particularly common during this survey, especially in the vicinity of bushfires. Learn more in our earlier post: [Why Uganda's Bushfires Aren't All Bad](#).

An adult long-crested eagle (*Lophaetus occipitalis*) stands out against the flowers of the red hot poker tree (*Erythrina abyssinica*) in Zoka Central Forest Reserve, north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong and Tom Butynski)



The most common raptor around the bushfires that we passed during this survey was the grasshopper buzzard (*Butastur rufipennis*). This intra-African migrant visits East Africa from its breeding grounds in the northern tropics between October and April. This photograph was taken near Kilak, north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong and Tom Butynski)



An adult western banded snake-eagle (*Circaetus cinerascens*) gazes from its perch in Otzi East Central Forest Reserve, north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong and Tom Butynski)



An adult hooded vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*) with impressive wingspan cruises above Otzi East Central Forest Reserve, north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)



This adult grey kestrel (*Falco ardosiaceus*) is among the smallest of the raptors we sighted in Otzi East Central Forest Reserve, north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong and Tom Butynski)





An adult Wahlberg's eagle (*Aquila wahlbergi*) surveys the area near Kilak, north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong and Tom Butynski)



An adult lizard buzzard (*Kaupifalco monogrammicus*) stands in hunting grounds in Otzi East Central Forest Reserve, north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong and Tom Butynski)

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MEET THE AUTHOR

Yvonne de Jong & Thomas Butynski

Yvonne A. de Jong (PhD) is a Kenya-based Dutch primatologist who has worked in Africa for more than 13 years. She is member of the Nocturnal Primate Research Group at Oxford Brookes University, member of various IUCN/SSC Specialist Groups including the Primate and Wild Pig Specialist Groups, and Collaborating Scientist of the Institute of Primate Research in Nairobi. Her main research focus is the biogeography, diversity and conservation of eastern Africa's primates and several other groups of large mammals, including the warthogs. She is the co-leader of the Eastern Africa Primate Diversity and Conservation Program and senior ecologist at the Lolldaiga Hills Research Programme)Sustainability Centre Eastern Africa' based in Laikipia, Kenya. Thomas M. Butynski (PhD) is an American conservationist and ecologist who has worked in Africa for 45 years, mostly in Botswana, Kenya, Uganda, and Equatorial Guinea. He is a member of four IUCN/SSC Specialist Groups (Primates, Antelopes, Afrotheria, Wild Pigs) and has served as Director of the Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation in Uganda, Director of Conservation International's Eastern Africa Biodiversity Hotspots Program in Kenya, Director of the King Khalid Wildlife Research Center in Saudi Arabia, Vice-Chair of the Africa Section of the IUCN/SSC Primate Specialist Group, Senior Editor of the journal African Primates, and a Senior Editor for Mammals of Africa. At present he is Co-leader of the Eastern Africa Primate Diversity and Conservation Program, and Director of Research at the Sustainability Centre Eastern Africa in Kenya.



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