

Raptor Migration in Thailand in November 1984

Relatively little is known about raptor migration in Thailand. Published information implies substantial autumn passage of raptors with discrete movements of Black Bazas *Aviceda leuphotes*, Crested Honey Buzzards *Pernis ptilorhyncus*, various species of *accipiter*, and Grey-faced Buzzards *Butastur indicus* (LEKAGUL ET AL., 1985; MELVILLE & FLETCHER, 1982; ROUND & VORAVAN, 1984).

During 7 November through 19 December 1984, while carrying out surveys of coastal areas in Thailand for shorebirds, I also observed some migrating raptors. Time of observations and flight directions of birds seen were noted. Observations were made with a 10 x 40 binocular and a 30x-60x telescope. For part of this period I was joined by Steen Christensen, Mogens Henrikson and Frank E. de Roder. Three areas in particular received attention: the inner Gulf of Thailand near Bangkok, at Bang Poo and Samut Sakhon; Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park and Prachuap Khiri Khan; and Thaleban National Park (Satun Province), in the far south (Fig. 1).

Migration

At most sites, a steady trickle of migrating raptors was apparent, with a preponderance of Black Bazas, Crested Honey Buzzards, Japanese Sparrowhawks (most small *accipiters* were thought to be this species); medium-sized *accipiters* which were possibly Northern Sparrowhawks *A. nisus*; and Grey-faced Buzzards. Three Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis* were also observed (Table 1). Most raptors observed passed overhead at a height of less than 100 m though a few, especially those seen near Thaleban, were so high that they were scarcely visible with the naked eye. The majority of birds passed solitarily. Small flocks were seen of Crested Honey Buzzard (largest group seen was 18 birds on 9 November, at Bang Poo) and Grey-faced Buzzard (9 birds on 28 November at Thaleban). Of a sample of 9 Crested Honey Buzzards which was aged, all appeared to be juveniles (on the basis of evenly spaced tail-bands, darkish secondaries and extensive blackish wing-tips).

Flight direction differed among sites. All birds seen in the inner gulf near Bangkok were heading WNW to WSW. Those at Prachuap Khiri Khan and Khao Sam Roi Yot were heading south, except for one Crested Honey Buzzard heading west. At Thaleban, the flight path varied between east and south, with the majority of birds heading SE to SSE, thus entering the pass at the head of the valley, and following the main direction of the mountain ridges into Malaysia.

Description of Steppe Eagles

The Steppe Eagles passed at a great height, but under excellent light conditions, at Thaleban. The first bird, an immature, moved through on 26 November 1984 at 1145 h. It was a large eagle with long and broad wings, and soared on flat wings, sometimes with the loose "hand" drooping slightly. It had a much-protruding head and a rather long tail of slightly ragged appearance. There was no white trailing edge to the wing and tail feathers, but the moulting greater underwing coverts formed an irregular, broken, whitish

band on the otherwise dark brown underwing. The carpal joint was very dark and the wing-tips were blackish. The under-tail coverts were paler than the underbody. Two other individuals passed by together on 28 November at 1410 h. Both were juveniles, since the wing and tail showed a distinct white trailing edge, in addition to the white margin to the underwing coverts, and the body and underwing were light brown and contrasted with the blackish primaries and secondaries. The birds were gliding with bent wings and a slightly drooping hand. The latter was occasionally inclined downwards. Given the height of migration, the short period of observation, and the absence of previous records, the details supplied at the time were then regarded as insufficient to add this species to the Thai list (P.D. ROUND, *in litt.*). However, in 1987, small numbers of Steppe Eagles were identified near Sekinchan in Malaysia, and two other observed in Singapore and Brunei (HELBIG & WELLS, 1990) and there have also been two subsequent Thai records: an immature flew in off the sea at Nai Harn Beach on the west coast of Phuket Island on 21 November 1989 (M. PERSSON *in litt.* to P.D. ROUND), and a first-year bird was present in the freshwater marsh at Khao Sam Roi Yot during 12–15 April 1995 (P.D. ROUND, *in litt.*). It appears that either the wintering of Steppe Eagles in S.E. Asia has been previously overlooked, or that this behaviour is becoming more frequent, perhaps due to increased deforestation.

Observations of other scarce species

Single pale morph Booted Eagles *Hieraaetus pennatus* were seen on migration at Prachuap Khiri Khan on 14 November, and at Khao Sam Roi Yot on 18 November by SC and MH. A juvenile Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca* was seen over the freshwater marsh at Khao Sam Roi Yot on 19 and 21 November, with a juvenile Greater Spotted Eagle *A. clanga* at the same site on 14 November. Khao Sam Roi Yot was already a well-known wintering site for Greater Spotted Eagle, but the Imperial Eagle sighting was only the second record for Thailand, and was the first for Khao Sam Roi Yot.

Acknowledgments: I thank Steen Christensen, Mogens Henrikson, and Frank E. de Roder, my companions in the field. Background information was provided by Philip Round. Our stay in Thailand was grant-assisted by INTERWADER (East Asia/Pacific Shorebird Study Programme).

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Table 1. Observations of raptor migration, 8–30 November 1984. (8–9 Nov, Bang Poo; 10 Nov, Samut Sakhon; 11–14 Nov, Prachuap Khiri Khan; 18–21 Nov, Khao Sam Roi Yot; 23–29 Nov, Thaleban; 30- Nov, Trang)

Date	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	18	19	20	21	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Total
No. hours observation	1	4	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	5	3	6	5	8	9	1	1	54
<i>Aviceda leuphotes</i>					11	1											7			19
<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	1	21	1		4	4		1				4		2	5	7	12	1		63
<i>Accipiter gularis</i>		2			2	1	1	1				2		1	1	11	13	2	1	38
<i>A. soloensis</i>						2										1				3
<i>Accipiter sp. (small)</i>	1	10	1	2	4	2		4	16	13	2	1	2	4	10	4	5			81
<i>Accipiter sp. (medium)</i>						2									1					3
<i>Butastur indicus</i>				2	2				1			1		1	5	6	15			33
<i>Buteo buteo</i>				1	2		1	1	1	1	1							1		9
<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>															1		2			3
<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>							1		1											2

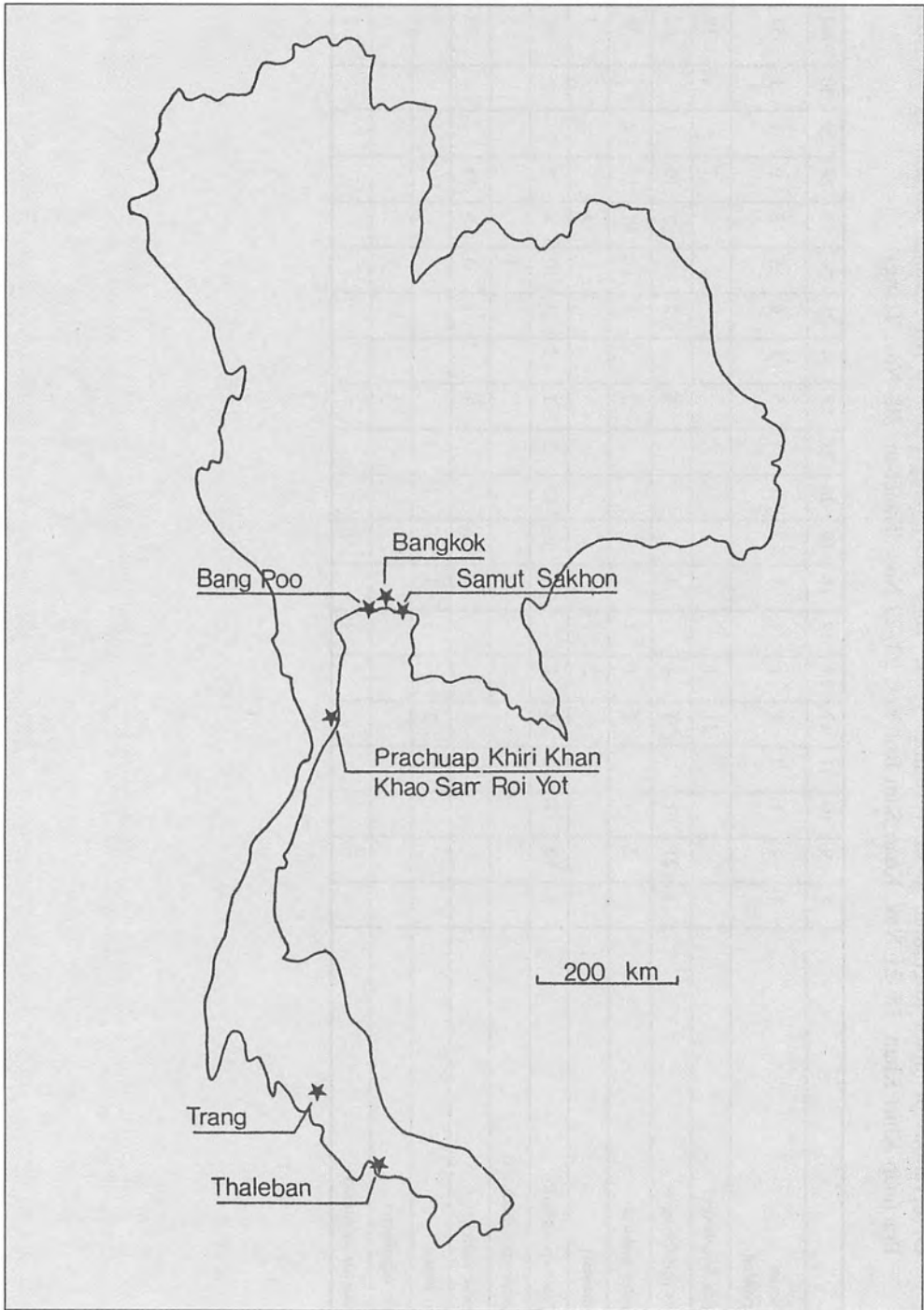


Figure 1. Localities mentioned in the text.