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Confirmation of Breeding of the Long-Legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*, Levaillant, J, 1850) in Western and Eastern Libya

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ABSTRACT

The Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*), particularly the North African breeding subspecies *B. r. cirtensis*, has long been suspected to breed across Libya, though precise breeding localities remained undocumented or poorly verified. This article provides the first confirmed breeding records from two distinct locations in Libya: the western region near Bani Waleed and the eastern region in Wadi Annagha in Derna and Tokhara suburb of the city of Labraq.

(*Buteo rufinus*, Levaillant, J, 1850) تأكيد تعشيش حوام طويل الساق

في غرب وشرق ليبيا

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يُشتبه منذ فترة طويلة في أن حوام طويل الساق (*Buteo rufinus*)، وتحديدًا السلالة المتكاثرة في شمال أفريقيا *B. r. cirtensis*، بأنه يتكاثر في أنحاء متفرقة من ليبيا، إلا أن مواقع التعشيش الدقيقة ظلت غير موثقة أو غير مؤكدة بشكل رسمي. تقدم هذه الورقة أول تسجيل مؤكد لتعشيش هذا النوع في موقعين متميزين داخل ليبيا: في المنطقة الغربية بالقرب من بني وليد، وفي المنطقة الشرقية بوادي الناقة بمدينة درنة وقرية طوخارة بمدينة لبرق.

Introduction

The Long-legged Buzzard is a large raptor with a wide Palearctic distribution (Garrido *et al.*, 2021). In North

Africa, the resident subspecies *Buteo rufinus cirtensis* has been described as a potential breeder across much of Libya (Bundy, 1976; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2013; Isenmann *et al.*, 2016), but confirmation of breeding has been largely anecdotal or based on indirect evidence. Earlier records

suggested possible breeding in Tripolitania (Gaskel, 2005), yet no nests were formally documented. However, potential indicators of a particular ecological health are key predators, such as raptors. The return of raptors to their nesting sites is often considered evidence of habitat recovery with reduced human interference (Iezekiel *et al.*, 2016).



Study Areas and Methods

Western Libya (Bani Waleed region): It is located in the northwest of Libya, about 180 km southeast of Tripoli (31°25'53.0"N 13°58'50.4"E). Surveys conducted during spring and early summer of 2025 revealed a pair of Long-legged Buzzards occupying a rocky cliff area, exhibiting territorial behavior and nest defense.

Eastern Libya

Wadi Annagha, near Derna: It is located at the western entrance to the city of Derna, which is about 300 km east of the city of Benghazi (32°42'34.8"N 22°32'57.8"E). Observations in June 2025 included a nest located on a cliff ledge containing one chick.

Tokhara village is a suburb of the city of Labraq, about three km east of the city center, which in turn is about 40 km west of the city of Derna (32°47'41.2"N 22°01'33.6"E).

Standard ornithological survey methods were used, including direct observation with binoculars and scopes, GPS documentation of nest sites, and behavioral monitoring to confirm breeding activity (ex: feeding of chicks).

Results

Bani Waleed

On 23 May 2025 a nest located on a south-facing cliff with one fledgling. Confirmed parental care and feeding in late May 2025. Moreover, the fledgling trying to learn to fly, but clearly not being as good as adults (fig. 1, 2).

Wadi Annagha, near Derna

Nest observed on a limestone outcrop. Adults seen bringing prey items to the chick in June 2025. Fledging observed around late June.

Tokhara village

In this area, one active nest of this species was recorded, after hatching in mid-June 2025, and the chick was still in the nest (fig. 3).

At each nesting site of this species, several nests of the same species were observed, but inactive. These findings represent the first confirmed breeding records of the species in both the western and eastern parts of Libya, filling a crucial gap in the species' regional breeding distribution.



Fig. (1): Active nest of Long-legged Buzzard in Bani Waleed.



Fig. (3): A chick of Long-legged Buzzard in a nest at Tokhara, Labraq.

Discussion

These observations support the assumption that *B. r. cirtensis* is a widespread resident breeder in Libya, as previously suggested (Bundy, 1976; Isenmann *et al.*, 2016) but never conclusively demonstrated in these specific regions. The use of cliffs for nesting is consistent with known habitat preferences (Hosseini-Zavarei *et al.*, 2008). These confirmations reinforce the importance of open and semi-arid habitats, especially near escarpments and valleys, for the conservation of this raptor.

Additionally, the confirmed presence of breeding pairs so far apart Bani Waleed in the west and Wadi Annagha and Tokhara in the east indicates a potentially continuous or at least fragmented breeding population across northern Libya.

Conclusion

The confirmed breeding of the Long-legged Buzzard in Bani Waleed, Wadi Annagha and Tokhara represents a significant advancement in understanding the distribution of *B. rufinus cirtensis* in Libya. Further systematic surveys are recommended to assess the full extent of the species' breeding range and conservation status.

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