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An European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* in Maharashtra, India

We report the first confirmed sighting of the European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* (hereinafter, EHBU) in Maharashtra, India. On 06 November 2024, at 0905 h, we observed a large raptor soaring over Vetat Tekdi grasslands, near quarry area (18.527°N, 73.817°E) in Pune District, Maharashtra [197, 198]. The bird appeared to be molting feathers from both wings and the tail. It was being mobbed by Black Kites *Milvus migrans*. Photographs were taken from multiple angles. Initially the bird was identified as an Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (hereinafter, OHBU). However, when photographs were shared on the Pune Birding Community forum, Adesh Shivkar noted that the features suggested EHBU rather than OHBU. On the next day, 07 November 2024, the bird was again seen briefly soaring at the same site at 0710 h. This time again, it was being chased by Black Kites.



Mayur Arole

197. European Honey-buzzard, with clearly visible dark carpal patch and four fingered primaries, photographed on 06 November 2024 at Vetat Tekdi, Pune, Maharashtra.



Aniruddha Gokhale

198. European Honey-buzzard showing a single, prominent dark terminal tail band, photographed on 06 November 2024 at Vetat Tekdi, Pune, Maharashtra.

Based on the identification criteria in Anand et al. (2020), following characteristics were observed in the bird clearly distinguishing it from OHBU and OHBU x EHBU hybrid;

1. **Dark carpal patch:** Prominent and clearly visible on the observed bird, absent in OHBU.
2. **Single dark terminal band on the tail:** Unlike OHBUs,

which typically exhibit two or more dark tail bands, the bird had a single, prominent dark terminal band.

3. **Subtle outer bar on secondaries:** The outer bar of the secondaries in the observed bird merged subtly into the coverts before reaching the body, unlike in OHBUs, where the bar extends further toward the body.
4. **Fewer primary fingers:** The bird showed only four primary fingers, whereas OHBUs typically have six.
5. **Eye color:** The bird's eye appeared yellow, in contrast to the red eyes typically seen in OHBUs.

As there are no features that would suggest an OHBU, we can rule out the possibility of an OHBU x EHBU hybrid. The identification was further confirmed through expert consultation, including discussions with Nirav Bhat, who also noted these distinguishing features. The species was sighted again on 14 February 2025 at the same location (Rane 2025).

These observations represent the first documented record of the EHBU in Maharashtra. There is one previous record of a hybrid OHBU x EHBU individual photographed from Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai in 2022 (Desai 2022). These sightings add to the growing knowledge of the distribution of the EHBU in India and is of considerable interest to birders and ornithologists in the region.

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A Pied Crow *Corvus albus* at Pulicat Lake, India: Could ship-assistance be the reason for all records from India?

Pulicat Lake is the second largest brackish water lagoon in India, covering c.620 sq. km. It has numerous islands, and is fed by three major rivers, making it a vital ecosystem for diverse flora and fauna (Francis & Aram 2016). The lake spans across two districts, Nellore in Andhra Pradesh and Tiruvallur in Tamil Nadu. In this note, we report a sighting of the Pied Crow *Corvus albus* from the Tamil Nadu sector of Pulicat Lake, a species native to Sub-Saharan Africa and not previously recorded from this region.

On 22 November 2024, at around 1000 h, we (BSN, SDR, & RS) saw a Pied Crow in the Annamalaichery area (13.457°N, 80.264°E) of Pulicat Lake, Tamil Nadu. The weather was clear and sunny. The bird was initially observed through a Nikon D5600 camera with a 70–300 mm lens. It was seen perching